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THE ADVENTURES OF JOHNNY WALKER
TRAMP

BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp
Later Days

★

Selected Poems

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Secrets

etc

THE ADVENTURES OF
JOHNNY WALKER

TRAMP

by

W. H. DAVIES



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Foreword

A FEW people, perhaps a very few, will remember that my *Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* was followed by three other books of prose, two of them dealing with my own tramping experiences, and the other being a novel. We will say no more about the novel, and regard it as a pest to be exterminated at sight. I will go so far as to offer twopence for every front page that comes my way, in the same way as we offer a penny for the tail of every rat that is killed. If any of my readers are fortunate enough to get possession of a score or more of that particular novel and send the front pages to my publisher for a reward, they will be doing more good to the community than any rat-catcher that ever lived, although he boasts of twenty thousand tails.

But when I come to mention the other two books, *Beggars* and *The True Traveller*, it is a different matter. To the younger generation those two books are unknown, nor were they known to any great extent to the readers of that time. On reading those two books some time ago, I decided that if they did not deserve to be better known it would be a wise thing to close my mouth for ever as a writer of prose. For those two books belonged to a day when I could tackle a subject with as much ease as a bee can open a flower, and I certainly cannot do that now,

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However, there was one strong point against them – the essay-form was used more than the narrative, and people preferred the latter. In doing this book, *Johnny Walker, Tramp*, I have used the experiences selected in *Beggars* and *The True Traveler*, but I have destroyed the essay-form, and made the book run as a story. This has been done successfully, I hope, without injury to the material contained in the two earlier books. And as this book is arranged in an entirely new way, with some new material added, I have every hope that it will get the welcome of a new book, even by those who remember the earlier ones. To the younger generation it will of course be a new book, and should come between the *Autobiography* and *Later Days*.

I am very pleased at the reception given to my last book, *Later Days*. The first two Press notices frightened me, and my self-confidence, which – with the exception of my liver – is probably the strongest part of my constitution, was shaken severely. The first notice appeared in a well-known evening paper, when the book was still hot from the Press. This great haste to write unkind words made the matter sound personal, and

‘Fe, fo, fi, fum,
I smelt the blood of a clergymun!’

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This attack was followed by another, where my book was said to be too dull to read. But seeing that the lady wrote still another long article in another paper, to say the same thing, proved that the book was far from dull to her, but was of some intense interest. However, after these two writers, who thought to guide both the Press and the public, had done their unkind work, a change followed quickly, and the book's fortunes improved.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, by your kind leave, I will introduce you to *Johnny Walker, Tramp*.

W. H. D.

I: THE SOUP-KITCHEN



JUST after the World's Fair in Chicago, there were thousands of men out of work, who were either begging at private houses or receiving charity soup at various places. One day a man called Sullivan, whom I knew fairly well, came up to me and said, 'Do you want a bowl of the best soup in the city?' 'Yes,' I answered, fiercely and frowning hard, so as to let him know that I wanted the real truth from him and no humbug. 'Yes,' I answered, 'show me the place.' 'Very well, then,' he said, 'follow me, for I am going there now.' With these words he started off with a quick step. I at once took several steps, so as to get into his stride, and in a second or two was in full swing with him. Sullivan was not a sociable man, for he had very little to say as we walked along. He had only taken a generous notion to help another to a bowl of good soup, and did not want to make a companion of him. For this reason he only acted as a guide on that particular occasion, and did not trouble much whether I followed him or not. Seeing this I made no attempt to be any more substantial than a second shadow.

The first time I had met Sullivan was in Mrs. Flanagan's saloon, where I had gone to get a drink. Mrs. Flanagan, who was a pure woman in spite of

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her naughty stories, had just finished telling me one of her finest jokes when Sullivan had entered. The joke related to Paddy Maloney and his wife Bridget. One day Paddy reminded his wife, with much scorn, that when he first went courting her she had no boots or stockings to her feet, and had little more than her bare legs and a Bible. To which Bridget quickly retorted, 'Ah, me foine fellow, if ye had paid as much attintion to me Bible as ye paid to moi bare legs, shure, ye'd be the Pope of Rome to-day.' I was laughing heartily over this joke when Sullivan entered. 'Good morning, Mrs. Flanagan,' cried Sullivan in his oiliest tone, for the landlady was a very outspoken woman, and he did not want to offend her. 'Good mawning be damned!' she snarled, turning on him fiercely; 'Good mawning be damned — it's whisky ye're after.' Of course Mrs. Flanagan knew well that Sullivan had, as usual, come to beg drink instead of buy it.

I would not have followed Sullivan, had I not been strongly impressed with his words, 'The best bowl of soup in the city.' For I knew where to get soup in several places, seeing that almost every creed and social body had started a soup-kitchen for the unemployed. Such poverty was quite a new thing in that city, and seeing how generous Americans are in giving charity, you can imagine how good the soup was. At one place I was given soup made

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out of haricot beans, which was almost as solid as pudding.

It was not long before Sullivan led me into a narrow alley, which was the back of one of the main streets. Going half-way down this alley, he suddenly stopped at a door which I had seen a man just enter, pushed it open and walked in, while I followed close at his heels. We were then in a small yard with the back door of a large house straight in front of us. Making his way to this second door, Sullivan, without knocking, opened it and walked in. We were then in a large kitchen, where I saw several men seated at tables, with piles of bread and big bowls of soup set before them. Sullivan took not the least notice of these men, but went straight to another door, which was open, and stood waiting, while I did likewise, standing close behind him. We were hardly there a second when a woman, smiling good-naturedly, came forward with two large bowls of thick soup, which we took and carried to a table.

Now, while I had been standing at the last door I had seen several women moving about, and what appeared to be strange was that they all, as far as I could judge, were dressed of equal richness. Each one appeared to be the lady of the house, for I saw not the least sign of aprons or servants' caps. I could not pick out one of them and say, judging by dress or dignity, 'This is a servant,' or 'That is the

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mistress.' They all appeared to be women of leisure. The one who brought us the soup did not appear to do it as a duty, but because she had been the first to notice us.

After we had finished our soup and were leaving, I asked Sullivan what kind of house it was, with so many well-dressed women there, and each with a beauty peculiar to herself. 'It is a sporting house,' he answered, which in England would be called a brothel. 'You can always rely on girls of that kind to do something good and substantial for the poor,' he continued; 'and they do not make the soup cold with hymns and prayers.'

No doubt the majority of people will think that a house of this kind would have a selfish motive in giving charity: that these women would do so with an eye to future profit, so as to get men to return their way under better conditions, when the men would be in work and have money. I must confess that, at that time, when I did not know life as I know it now, such cruel thoughts entered my own mind. But since then I know that these women are kind-hearted in the extreme. In fact, not long after this experience, I was told by a mean, unprincipled beggar that the very best people to beg from were women of that kind. He said that the first thing he did on entering a strange town was to inquire in what part they lived. For it must be remembered

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that in America they live in certain streets; they do not go out looking for men, but men seek them at their houses.

After this visit to a sporting house, I left Sullivan, but met him again a few hours after at a certain mission house where soup was to be had at the end of the meeting.

As I have said, Sullivan was not very sociable, but on this particular evening he suddenly became inspired and made one of the most moving speeches I have ever heard. He made a public confession of his sins, which men of Sullivan's type often do, so as to enable them the better to get assistance. On this occasion Sullivan strode on to the platform and told the audience that he was not only the worst drunkard in the city, but that he was also a scoundrel and a very dangerous character. He not only said that he had served one long term in prison, but hinted that he had deserved many others for crimes he dared not mention. Of course these were all lies, for Sullivan was really no more than a common, harmless beggar. However, these confessions impressed the rich lady who was the main support of that mission; who was a widow, and who was to be seen night after night on the platform.

I was very much surprised to see Sullivan, the night after his confession, sitting on the platform and wearing a white collar and a new black tie.

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On the third night he was wearing a brand-new pair of boots.

On the fourth night he was dressed in a new suit of clothes, and had a white handkerchief and a pair of light gloves.

On the fifth night he was wearing a gold chain.

On the sixth night he opened the meeting with prayer and then sang a song the words of which he claimed to have composed out of his own head, to fit an old familiar tune. This song he sang three times in succession, so that the audience should remember it.

On the seventh night Sullivan was understood to be engaged to be married to the rich widow, who was the main support of the mission.

No doubt, if the whole truth had been known, that Sullivan had not been so great a drunkard; that he was not so dangerous a man as he claimed to be; that he had seldom used bad language; that he had never served a long term of imprisonment: no doubt if these truths had been known, he would never have impressed a rich Christian widow, and been made her leading man at home and abroad. It seems strange how easily some women are to be caught by lies. I could have picked out more than a score of men that had been worse than Sullivan. This innocent, confiding woman, deceived by Sullivan's lies

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that he was a jail-bird and the greatest drunkard in the city, went so far as to offer him her hand and fortune.

It was not long after this when I met Brum, the well-known beggar, who was to have something to do with my life for the next year or two. We were then in a land of plenty, where the people were so happy and good-natured that a bold beggar could often tell them straightforward that he would not work for ten dollars a day, which would cause more amusement than indignation, and he would still be assisted with the best of everything. In fact, the common necessities of life were so easily to be obtained that a superior beggar like Brum had to show his superiority over the ordinary beggar like myself by begging out-of-the-way luxuries — such as cough lozenges and chewing-gum, and a clean shirt and socks once a week, while I washed mine in the woodland stream, and dried them at the camp-fire, or in the wind and sun. How often have I received unsolicited clothes and boots from houses at which I had simply asked for meals! But when I exposed such articles at the camp, before the eyes of other beggars, I always took the credit on myself for having begged them, for fear of Brum's scorn. At one house where I called, the lady wanted her garden cleared of fallen leaves, and offered me twenty-five cents and my breakfast to sweep the said leaves into

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a corner and set fire to them, which could be done in half an hour. I at once accepted her offer, although I was very much afraid that Brum or another would pass, and I would be received with scorn on my return to the camp. When I had done this task the lady gave me a good breakfast, with twenty-five cents placed at the side of my plate. After I had sat down to this meal the lady left the room and shortly returned with a pair of boots. I thanked her for her kindness, and she again left the room, and again returned, this time with a pair of trousers, a shirt, and a pair of socks. These things she wrapped in a large journal, saying that my soul would not be any the worse for reading that journal — which had a religious tendency. After leaving her I made separate bundles of these things, so as to pretend at the camp that I had received them at different houses, which would considerably enhance my reputation as a beggar, by showing my dogged determination to succeed. When I reached the camp I found that not only Brum had returned, but that two others were there, namely, Wingy, who had lost an arm, and Frisco Fatty. I need scarcely say that when that pair of well-known beggars saw my success, they eyed me with great satisfaction and spoke with much respect, although they were too well bred as beggars to express any surprise. Of course, I made no reference to work, which would have caused Brum to

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blush with shame, and would most likely have made Wingy and Frisco Fatty so disgusted that they would have left our fire and gone deeper into the woods, to make a fire of their own.

It was about ten o'clock, and we were sitting at the fire — Brum, Wingy, Fatty, and myself — all in the best of humour, each man having had a good breakfast. Brum now proposed that we should beg food for our pockets, at dinner-time, so that there would be no need to leave the camp for the rest of the day, and we could then make coffee and have our supper together. We had just agreed to this when into the camp walked a young fellow, not much more than a boy, who was picking his teeth. After saying, 'Hallo, boys!' he continued to pick his teeth, and at last remarked, 'The people in this town keep tough chicken, and I shall be mighty glad to be out of it.' Saying this, he took hold of an old tin pot, turned it bottom uppermost, and seated himself next to Wingy. At the mention of chicken I noticed Brum's ears cock, and then an amused smile came into his face, but he made no remark.

Although the new-comer made anything but a favourable impression, he appeared nothing daunted, for there he sat, looking at the fire and whistling, until such time as one of us would start a conversation. 'I believe that I have seen your face before,' said Wingy quietly, and looking the stranger full in the

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face. Now, Wingy knew that he had not seen him before, but he did not want his own presence disgraced by a new-made beggar – who is known to the profession by the name of ‘fresh cat.’ Therefore, if his thought had been truly expressed, it would have been, ‘Who are you?’ The new-comer certainly answered Wingy’s thought instead of his language, for he answered with great dignity, ‘I am Cincinnati Slim.’ As it happened that the city of Cincinnati was Wingy’s winter quarters, and that he had never heard of or met this beggar before, you can imagine what a painful silence followed. However, although Wingy plainly showed by his expression that the camp was being imposed on by the arrival of ‘a fresh cat’ (an amateur beggar), he soon recovered his good humour. But it was very fortunate that another fledgeling beggar had not then arrived, or Wingy’s Christian charity and forbearance would have gone up with the smoke of our camp-fire.

When dinner-time arrived we all left the camp and each of us succeeded without much trouble in getting a hot dinner and extra cold food for supper. I was very fortunate in getting dinner at the first house at which I called, and on going to another house was given a paper parcel, which contained two sandwiches and a banana; this I thought would be ample for my own supper, and returned to the camp. Now, my business could scarcely have been

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transacted quicker, and yet, when I arrived at the camp, I saw to my surprise Cincinnati Slim, picking his teeth. 'Chicken again,' he said to me, pulling a long face, as he struggled with his back teeth.

At last we were all together, and a very happy supper we had that evening. Cincinnati Slim had not arrived in the camp to hear our arrangements, so Brum, seeing more food than could be eaten, invited him to a share. Slim remonstrated, saying that he wanted nothing, having had an excellent dinner of chicken and sweet potatoes, and had not known of our arrangements, or he would have begged enough for a dozen men. Time after time I saw the same amused expression come into Brum's face as he watched Cincinnati Slim at supper, and I could not help but notice that the latter swallowed large mouthfuls of food with extraordinary speed.

The next morning Wingy proposed making a large stew, and each man was commissioned to beg certain articles after having had his breakfast. Cincinnati Slim was to beg bread, which was very easy; and I had to account for meat, which was quite as easy to obtain, seeing that it was very cheap in that part of the country. Wingy had the difficult task of begging coffee, sugar, pepper, and salt; and Brum's task to get raw vegetables was not to be envied. These arrangements left Frisco Fatty free, but he was too good a beggar to take advantage of this, and

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said emphatically that he would get a supply of tobacco. With these ideas we all sallied out.

On this expedition we all succeeded except Cincinnati Slim. He walked into the camp, after we had all returned, picking his teeth as usual. He complained that every time he asked for bread he was invited indoors to a hot meal, and that after this had occurred for the third time, he had been forced to give up in despair, for fear another hot meal would be offered to his already overloaded stomach. However, that did not matter, for Brum had begged a loaf of bread, in addition to onions, potatoes, and tomatoes. He seemed to have suspected the failure of bread.

At one o'clock the stew was ready, and we shared it out in tin cans, with which the camp was well supplied. Cincinnati Slim had an extraordinary appetite, and certainly ate twice as much as any other, and was encouraged by Brum to do so. He apologized for his third helping by saying that it was his favourite dish, and that it was a change from so much chicken. It was certainly a good meal, and we were all contented to remain in the camp for the rest of the day, with hot coffee and bread for supper.

When I awoke the next morning my companions were asleep, but Brum was not to be seen. After indulging in another nap, I awoke from my second

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sleep, and saw my companions washing and preparing to go for breakfast. I was just about to inquire for Brum when into the camp that true beggar walked. He, it seemed, had risen early, and begged his breakfast at a poor workman's house – a deed that I had never known him to do before. At last we were all ready to seek breakfast, and Brum, having had his, was left smoking his pipe at the fire.

It was certainly a most extraordinary town for good-natured people, for in less than half an hour we were all back in the camp. 'Where's Brum?' I asked Wingy. 'I don't know,' he answered. The words were hardly out of my mouth when Cincinnati Slim appeared, still picking his teeth, and close at his heels came Brum.

After Wingy and Frisco Fatty had left the camp, for they were on their way to Galveston, Brum looked straight at Cincinnati Slim and said, 'Well, Slim, what kind of breakfast did you have? More chicken?' 'Not this time,' answered Slim; 'I had ham and fried eggs.' 'You young liar!' cried Brum. 'You have not been to a single house, for I have been following and watching you all the time. You have had nothing to eat since you came, except what you have had at this camp. If it were not for luck, young fools like you would starve. Here, take this' – and he threw Cincinnati Slim a paper of food.

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The latter sat down without a word and began to eat.

Brum and I remained at this camp for several days, and probably would have stayed much longer had it not been for the arrival of a Cockney. Cockneys are the greatest beggars in the world, there can be no doubt of that. It is the Cockney, and he alone, who is admired by those extraordinary beggars who are born Americans, and who are conceited enough to think that they could by their energies live well as beggars in the poorest slums in Europe. Even the beggars in the Western States of America, who, owing to the great distance between towns, must never be without a dollar or two in their pockets – even these energetic beggars have great respect for a Cockney, though they scorn the petty food-begging operations of others.

I never in all my acquaintance with Brum saw him look so alarmed as when he entered the camp, after having been out begging, and saw this Cockney making coffee, and a pile near him consisting of a number of parcels of food. This man confessed that he had just begged the town – and we soon had cause to know it, for I had great difficulty in getting one little sandwich, and though Brum brought to the camp enough for two, he must have had a great struggle, for he was away much longer than usual. That he had struggled hard was

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apparent from his behaviour, for in spite of the Cockney's friendly advances, Brum would hardly give him a civil word. Yes, there was not the least doubt but what Brum was jealous. Although we three remained in the camp together for two days, I could not help but notice that Brum would never allow the Cockney to get the start on him, but every time we went begging he quickly followed the other. And what do you think this Cockney had the impudence to say to Brum? 'Old man,' said he, 'I'll see if I can beg you a pair of trousers.' When he heard this Brum almost foamed at the mouth, for he prided himself on being one of the best beggars in America, whether it was in getting money, food, or clothes.

I remembered a very mean trick being served on two Irishmen, Pat and Tim. The guilty one was a Cockney, and he was lucky to escape with his life. Seeing at the camp two hungry and helpless Irishmen, he promised to show them a good house, at which no beggars, however often they came, were refused food. The elated pair accompanied 'Cockney' for this interesting purpose, and were soon shown a very large house, at which, the Cockney said, 'he had been treated with as much consideration as though he were the Pope of Rome.' He then left them to make their own arrangements, and, after much indecision, it was arranged that Pat

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should go first, and, on his return, his companion Tim should try his luck. Pat, with every confidence, approached the big house and rang the bell; but the door was almost immediately opened, as though the inmate had been lying in wait. The Irishman had scarcely opened his mouth when the man that answered the door shouted, 'What, you big, able-bodied rascal? I'll give you something to eat,' and rushed at the poor Irishman with a thick walking-stick. This was very serious, for Pat also saw the grinning face of a stalwart nigger behind his master, and the Irishman thought the best thing he could do was to leave in a hurry without more words, which he did.

It quite upset Pat to think that he had been induced to go first, so he made up his mind that Tim should share his misfortune. Therefore, when he returned and Tim asked, 'What luck, Pat?' Pat rubbed his body, saying, 'Begorra, there was more mate than five min could ate.' On hearing this good news Tim braced himself and after a long pause, walked with reckless determination towards the house. But Tim had no time to ring the bell, for the door was suddenly flung open, and, before he could utter one word, a white man and a nigger began to attack him with heavy sticks. Tim did not wait to argue or fight, but took to his heels at once. 'This is a noise thrick, and the both of us from

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Kilkenny,' said he to Pat. 'Spake out,' said Pat innocently, although he had seen the whole transaction; 'shure, we are frinds, and frinds should share and share aloike.' I am very pleased to say that the two Irishmen had their reward when they returned, for three good American beggars had thoroughly worked the town, and had in their possession enough food for ten men – but the Cockney never returned to the camp. It was certainly a cruel joke to play on two hungry men, innocent and unsuspecting.

2: STROKES OF GENIUS



AMERICAN beggars knock boldly at doors like kings' messengers. An imposing mansion with marble pillars is a challenge to them, and they dance up its steps and press the button of an electric bell with a violence that no familiar friends of the house would dare use; but an English beggar almost sinks into the earth when his ears receive the report of his timid hand. In fact, except in very rare instances, where a large house has been approached and – for a wonder – found good, and has become famous to the begging fraternity – except in these very rare instances, English beggars pass by large mansions as though they were empty churches or smallpox hospitals.

I don't suppose there is a more daring or more impudent rascal on earth than a good American beggar. It is always his boast that he has begged an ex-president, or the present one, and he claims to have received benefits from a number of well-known millionaires, actors, and prize-fighters. Such proud experiences never fall from the lips of an English beggar, for the simple reason that he lives on the working and middle classes. A row of small cottages is of more benefit to him than an equal number of fine villas, and he thinks he is in a hungry wilder-

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ness when there is nothing to be seen but very large houses – and he is quite right.

It has always seemed strange to me that Americans, who as a race are notoriously eager to make money, should be so generous to a beggar. Even when they refuse it is often more on account of haste than meanness. Not only that, but they give with so much indifference, and are never annoyed at being solicited, whether they are reading papers on the verandas of hotels, or promenading a sea-beach in the presence of ladies. And, what is more, they seldom pry into a beggar's past, except in such cases where their interest is aroused by a beggar's speech. For instance, a gentleman's father or mother may have been English, Irish or Scotch, and when he thinks he can detect that tongue in the speech of a beggar, he is very apt to ask one or two questions, and the beggar is invariably more generously assisted.

The American tramp begs in such a quick, thorough, business-like manner, with such calm persistence and with such confidence, that he must at last meet with success in the very worst places; for that reason he will not stand for cross-examination, and if people attempt to pry into his life, he is just as likely as not to tell them straight that he is a beggar, that he does not work, and never will.

The blindest housewife must soon have her eyes

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opened to the ingratitude of these men. Most of the houses in small American towns burn wood, so that a woman is often glad to give a tramp a good hot meal for five or ten minutes' wood-chopping. But when beggars are asked to chop wood for a meal, they complain of working on an empty stomach. Alas for their ingratitude! for, after being served with a good meal, they often walk away without a glance at the wood-pile. Some of them do worse – they take the axe, and after delivering one or two blows they manage to break the handle; then they take the axe to the mistress of the house, and after quietly apologizing for the accident, walk away with heavy bellies and light hearts.

One lady, who had been served this trick a number of times, had become so irritated, for she could no longer regard them as accidents, that she decided to feed no more tramps except when her husband was on the premises. Brum, my friend and tutor, unfortunately happened to call at this lady's house, and was at once informed that if he wanted a meal he would have to chop wood for it. Brum agreed to this, but suggested that he could work all the better for having the meal first. He was soon seated at the table, and after enjoying a very fine meal, repaired to the wood-pile. After chopping wood for five minutes he was just about to drop the axe and leave, when he heard a man cough.

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Looking in that direction, he saw to his surprise a man seated on a chair, watching him with a sarcastic smile on his face, and, what was far worse, a shotgun was lying across his knees. There was nothing else for poor Brum to do than to continue to chop wood until the man gave him permission to go. Brum thought he would never regain his freedom, for it was a full half-hour before the man came forward and said, smiling coldly, 'You may now go, for you have earned your meal.'

For a long time after this incident the sight of a wood-pile made poor Brum feel faint and dizzy. No doubt it also filled him with a wish to have vengeance. It was a great pity that such a noble fellow should have to suffer this indignity through others. For Brum would always oblige the ladies by chopping a tiny bit of wood, but of course he would never work without first eating, and five minutes' work was his time limit for the very best of meals. He never broke an axe, or sneaked away without doing a little work.

Brum had his revenge when he took advantage of a lady at a large house, who was surrounded with servants of both sexes. This lady explained to Brum that she would give him a good meal, provided he would afterwards chop wood. He willingly gave a promise and took the meal. While he was chopping it came under his notice that his shoes were not

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altogether as good as they should be; so, after chopping enough wood to make a show, he deliberately chopped off the heel of his left shoe. After doing this, he went to the lady and brought the 'accident' to her notice. The result of this was that she, after looking in vain for an old pair, thought it cheaper to give Brum a dollar to buy a second-hand pair of shoes than to give away a pair of her husband's. So Brum was a dollar in pocket, for, being such a good beggar, he had very little difficulty in getting another pair, and of course people could see that he was sadly in need of them.

Ah, Brum was equal to almost any emergency, for he had marvellous impudence. See how he begged a dollar from the English Consul in a seaport, and then went straight on board ship and begged a bowl of soup of a common seaman! After which he swore that the soup had scalded his throat, and he begged sweetshops for jujubes to suck. A wonderful beggar! whose persuasive powers could succeed with a proud English Consul, and was then equal to the task of approaching a common seaman.

But, after all is said, the most daring feat that was ever performed by an American beggar is not to be put to the credit of men who have begged millionaires, presidents, and consuls, but to a dirty, unkempt, hairy tramp, whose mind was suddenly illumined by the light of divine genius.

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This man was so dirty and ragged that he was a disgrace to third-rate beggars, much less such men as Brum, New Haven Baldy, and Detroit Fatty. This man, satisfied with rags, dirt, and long matted hair and beard, suddenly became ambitious for fame, and inspired with an idea that had never before entered the minds of the most daring tramps. After having slept in the open air for a number of months, this man not only determined to sleep in a bed, but to wake the next morning famous like Byron. Inspired with this noble idea, he journeyed to a distant town, where lived the richest man in the land, surrounded by luxuries unequalled by kings. Everything was in the tramp's favour, for the richest man in the land was away from home, and the poorest and dirtiest man in the land had decided to sleep in the former's bed! That this tramp was under supernatural influence there can be no doubt, or how could he enter the grounds, much less the house, without being seen by one of the numerous servants? Again, what led his feet direct to that room — one of a hundred — and whispered in his ear, 'This is his bed'? And such a bed it was! so white, so soft, so comfortable, that the happy tramp slept long after daylight.

No doubt he would have slept much longer, had he not been disturbed. For when next morning a servant entered the room, she saw, to her surprise

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and horror, some very ragged clothes at the foot of the bed, and a black tin can, which the tramp used for making coffee, hanging on the beautiful bedpost. After which she saw a very dirty pair of hands on the bed, and then she shrieked, for she now saw the dirtiest and roughest-looking face she had ever seen, there, on her master's white pillow! Her startled cry soon brought others, and it was not long before the sleeper, now awake and smiling, was out of bed and standing between two indignant constables, who stared at the dark shadow of their prisoner's head on the white pillow.

This, I believe, was the most daring feat that was ever performed by a tramp.

One of the finest and most perfect piece of begging I have known was performed by Boston Shorty. Such an example in the art of begging should be remembered and cherished, so I will record it, at the same time feeling a little jealousy, which is quite natural, that I was not the hero on that occasion.

The time was morning, and Boston Shorty felt disposed for breakfast. Seeing a tenement house, with three stories and a basement, he at once entered, and, climbing the stairway to the top story, knocked at the door in a business-like manner – for the short one was too proud a beggar to knock humbly at any man's door. In fact, he knew well from experience that a business-like method was just as likely

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to meet with success as to bother his brains to invent lies. Therefore when a stout, pleasant-looking woman answered the door, he politely wished her good morning, and with a pleased smile told her in a few words that he had come for a little breakfast — in the same manner as a landlord or his agent would ask for the rent. ‘Sit down,’ said the good woman; and Shorty at once sat down on the stairs. In a few moments she stood before him with a plate of hot buckwheat cakes and a large basin of coffee. After he had disposed of these, he again knocked at the door, and returned the empty articles, at the same time thanking the woman for her kindness. There was nothing in this act to distinguish Shorty from a thousand other beggars; but it chanced that after walking about for two or three hours, he found himself at dinner-time passing the same house. Now, no man, except a born beggar, would think of climbing the same stairs again, with so many other houses near, for in all likelihood he would be confronted by his former benefactress. But this Shorty did, for, going up to the second story of the same tenement, he knocked at the door, which was soon answered by — the same woman! This unexpected meeting considerably surprised the short man, and it took him so long to recover his wits that the good woman, knowing his wants, came to his assistance, and called indoors, ‘Mrs. Smith, here’s

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a man wants some dinner.' Saying which, she smiled at Shorty and went to her own flat above.

On hearing this call, Mrs. Smith immediately came forward, and, looking at Shorty, and being satisfied with his appearance, said, 'Come in.'

It was after this success that Boston Shorty, when leaving the house, proved himself to be the born beggar that he was; for he at once made up his mind to consult the tenant on the main floor as to the prospects of supper. So he strayed idly about till evening, and, when supper-time came, entered the house for the third time.

Beggars have great confidence at this time of the day, for the men are at home, and kind-hearted women often refuse beggars for the simple reason that they are afraid of them. For this reason Shorty felt quite relieved when the door was answered by a man, for it was beginning to get dark, and the most kind-hearted of women are apt to be unreasonable at that time. Shorty heard a whispered consultation between the man and woman, which was soon followed by the man saying, 'Walk in, my man,' which the latter did.

The lady looked rather surprised when she saw Shorty's face. 'Didn't I see you go upstairs at noon?' she asked. 'Madam,' answered the short one, not a bit abashed - 'Madam, I may have done so, for the houses hereabout are so much alike.'

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Now, what do you think of that? Three meals in succession at one house, and from three distinct families. That in itself was a gem of begging, but to Shorty's eyes it still lacked perfection; for, during supper-time, he explained his homeless condition, and requested as another favour that they would give him an old blanket and allow him to sleep in the basement!

On one occasion, when I was travelling along Long Island Sound, I had the honour of meeting Boston Shorty and receiving a little kindness from him. For when I was about to call at a house for my dinner, Boston Shorty suddenly clutched my shoulder, and said impressively: 'Whatever you do, do not address that woman as Lady, but call her Madam or Mrs.' Just to humour him, for I thought such advice ridiculous, I addressed the lady as Madam, and explained my needs. She motioned me to a small, wooden outhouse, which I entered, and seeing a chair and a table there, sat down. In about two minutes the lady reappeared, carrying a hot dinner, for which I stood, as became a gentleman, and thanked her, saying, 'I thank you, Madam,' but was almost on the point of saying 'lady.' After having had dinner, I went to the back door and knocked, to return the empty dishes and to thank her for her kindness. 'You are quite welcome,' she said; 'the only people I refuse are those who say

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“lady,” for I have cause to believe that such people are professional beggars.’ It will be seen, from this incident, how one little word can assist or spoil a man in following his profession.

Boston Shorty was certainly one of the keenest beggars in America. The sight or sound of money put the very devil in him. If he heard coins rattling in the pockets of a passer-by, he would follow that person side by side, up one street and down another, until he had succeeded in talking the man out of a coin. If he saw a lady open her purse, he was at once at her side, and explaining his position. He boasted that he had begged the President, when the latter was visiting his paternal home. The Kid had intended to beg the house for clothes, but, seeing the President alone in the garden, quickly altered his mind. He claimed to have then talked the gentleman out of a five-dollar bill. Whether this story was true or not, I cannot say, but I am certain of one thing — that it was only the want of opportunity that would keep it from being attempted. The pomp and splendour of Solomon’s throne would not have daunted the Baltimore Kid, if he saw the way clear of stern guards and meddlesome attendants. Many of the great capitalists of America, and many Europeans of title, had succumbed to the Kid’s voice. Yes, he has often related to me how easy he found the Grand Duke of Gorgonzola, and how long it

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took to convince Tomkins the millionaire butcher. However careful a tramp may be to avoid places where there is an abundance of work, it is not always that he can succeed. It was in a small town in Texas that I had a narrow escape of losing the delightful companionship of Brum. I had gone to a saw-mill boarding-house in expectation of getting a good free dinner, having taken the precaution to wait until all the men had returned to work, so that I would then see no other than the lady of the house, and she, of course, would know little about the work at the mill. When I knocked, the lady answered the door, and after hearing my story invited me indoors. She was a fine, motherly-looking woman, stout — the very kind of creature in whom Brum had so much confidence, that she herself lived well, and would sympathize with others that could not do the same. But who should I see when I got inside but the manager or owner of the mill, who, for some reason or other, had not yet returned to business. As a general rule a woman is trustful, and will believe almost anything; but I was now unexpectedly confronted by a hard business man, who would probably ask a number of awkward questions of trades that maybe he knew something about. While I was having dinner, these questions were put to me and apparently answered to his satisfaction. 'Now,' said he, when I was preparing to leave, 'I can find you

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work at the mill, and you can start at once. I am not reckoned to be a bad master; the wages will certainly not be bad for a beginner, and you will never, I am sure, have cause to complain of this boarding-house. Your face appears to be open and honest, and you have a straightforward look that I like.' The last remark made my face as red as a beetroot with guilt, which he, no doubt, took to be a pleasant sign of modesty. This was an awkward position, and I began to explain myself. 'Sir,' said I, 'I am a tailor by trade, and am now on my way to Houston, where I am sure of getting work. I earn three, four, and sometimes five dollars a day at my trade, and am the main support of a family of little sisters and brothers. So you see how others must suffer if I accept work in a mill at a dollar and a quarter a day. Not of myself I think, but others.' The man seemed to be quite satisfied with this explanation, and said, 'At any rate, you shall have a little job and earn a dollar to help you on the way.' Then turning to the landlady, he asked the following question, which almost froze the marrow in my bones: 'Where is that dark pair of trousers that were split?' As the reader will guess, I was no tailor, and could do no more than sew a button on a pair of trousers. So what a sigh of relief I gave when the kind-hearted woman said that she had given them away some time before. The man was now thoughtful, and I was

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very much afraid that he was trying to bring to mind other wearing apparel that would need repair. Being afraid of this, I rose, and hastily thanking them for my good dinner, walked towards the door. He followed me, being on his way to the mill, and before I left him he placed in my hand a silver half-dollar, wishing me good-bye and good luck.

Brum was very pleased to see me coming, as he had begun to have fears that I had been arrested, or had been offered work and accepted it. Brum was very particular as to what kind of companions he made, and if he lost me he might have travelled alone for a considerable time.

Some time after this Brum and myself were very awkwardly placed when a party of boys determined, in pity for our idleness, to find us work. These boys were squirrel-shooting in the woods, and seeing our camp-fire at once came forward and began a sociable conversation. All the boys were armed with guns, and that is why boys in that part of the world are not in much fear of tramps, in fact the fear is more likely to be on the tramps' side. Now, it happened that some railroad work was being done close to our camp, and the work was in the hands of Italians, more often called Dagoes. The boys, having probably heard their elders speak ill of such people, determined that we two idle Americans — judged to be so by our language — should be installed in the place of

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the Italians, and the latter driven out of that part of the country. 'Come,' they said to Brum and me, 'we will soon find you work.' This was very awkward, and poor Brum began to totter in the camp and groan. 'What's the matter?' asked one of the kind-hearted lads. 'Boys,' said Brum slowly, and with great difficulty, 'I am a very sick man. I am now making my way to Houston as fast as I can, to get hospital treatment.' 'Yes,' I said firmly, and with quick apprehension. 'Yes, and it shall never be said that I deserted a sick companion.' 'Good luck to you,' said one of the lads, after which they soon left.

There was no other course now than to leave this place at once, for if we stayed any longer we were certain to see one of these lads again, seeing that there were so many of them and that the town was very small.

In spite of this disinclination to work, there are times when a tramp feels inclined to break the monotony by doing a little light labour. With such a noble resolve Brum and I left Houston to pick strawberries on our way to Galveston. On reaching the land of strawberries, we immediately made inquiries as to the prospect of work, and were recommended to a large farm which was under the control of a syndicate of Chinamen. On approaching the boss Chinaman and explaining our wish, we were at

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once engaged. At this farm each Chinaman seemed to be allotted one task. One was to be seen with a large watering-can watering the plants from morning till night, in sunshine or rain.

The next morning we started to pick after having received our instructions from the boss Chinaman, namely, 'to pickee clean, and leave a little stem so as people can catchee hold of the bellies.' Alas! the difficulty was to find the berries, and we were to be paid according to our picking; the water-carrier was far too industrious, for his watering beneath a hot sun was certainly bad for the plants — it did not require a farmer to know that. Needless to say, we remonstrated in a very short time and demanded our wages, in spite of the boss Chinaman coming forward with three berries on the palm of his right hand, and crying exultingly, 'Lookee at the big bellies I pickee!'

We received our money, which amounted to very little less than half a dollar between us, and left. It is surprising the number of jobs that I have left with very small wages to come, just enough to buy a bag of peanuts, or the price of a shave.

Of course we would not have been quite so independent as this had we not left Pat Healey at work two weeks before.

Thinking he must now have ten or fifteen dollars saved, we resolved to call on him, and after getting

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him discharged, help him to spend his savings. With this object we boarded a fast freight train, and arrived that night at the place where we had left him — where he had accepted light work in a garden.

The next morning Brum called at the house for breakfast, which the good lady at once supplied. Brum had not seen any signs of Pat, so he made inquiries, and the lady informed him that the man had gone away the day before, 'with ten or fifteen dollars,' thought Brum, and groaned.

I was so disappointed when I received from Brum this information, that I was ill for several days after. I must have been light-headed for several days, for I thought every voice I heard was Pat calling to us, and every form I saw in the distance seemed to be his.



THE most annoying position I was ever in was when travelling in the State of Tennessee. There were three of us together, and two had money in plenty – that is, we had enough to supply ourselves with the necessities of life for a month at least. But we had made the great mistake of leaving the railroad, on which the towns were built, and walking the back country roads – which were wild and unfrequented, with a stray house here and there. The mistake was that we had not taken the precaution to supply ourselves with provisions, not doubting but that with money we could purchase food at any house which we might chance to see. We had passed several houses and, at last, beginning to feel the pangs of hunger, made up our minds to call at the next house we came to. Three houses passed, and we had not seen one that was likely to serve our purpose – no houses except negro shanties and a planter's large house lying far back from the road. When we did at last come to a decent-looking place, we were by then three hungry and desperate men, and were not long in explaining to its owner the object of our visit. On our appearance that gentleman seemed none too pleased, and, in spite of our confession of hunger, and our willingness to pay to have it ap-

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peased, did not seem in any way to favour our presence. He was outside the house when we accosted him, and, after hearing us and refusing further conversation, began to make his way indoors. We knew, of course, that once inside he would take more drastic measures to get rid of us, that he would arm himself and order us to be gone. Knowing this, Texas Jack at once drew a revolver and made him stand, while we lost no time in going indoors and helping ourselves, taking as much bread and bacon as would do for a meal. Before we left the house, my companion hid the farmer's gun, which we saw standing in the corner. We then told the farmer what we had done, and after advising him not to follow us, and giving him a dollar bill — which was four times the worth of what we had taken — made our way along the road as fast as we could. No doubt the man had been afraid we would not pay him, and we knew well that he was hardly likely to follow us after receiving a dollar for such a small theft.

But it is in the backwoods of Arkansas where the most unenlightened people of America live. At one time I was walking a railroad in that State, which for a number of miles was little more than trestles built over the swamps. There was very little solid foundation, although for years men had been filling in the deep hollows under the rails. In my ten miles' walk I saw a hundred snakes and more, sunning themselves

on the track. They would crawl out of the adjoining swamps and lie between the sleepers, many of them being cut in two, having been caught by a train when they were lying across the rails. These snakes were all dangerous to tread on, and it was necessary for a man to keep his eyes continually on the earth, and to stand still if he wanted to look elsewhere.

There is one very interesting creature in the swamps of Arkansas, and that is the wild hog, who has made himself famous under the name of 'Razor-back.' Four of us had made our camp in the driest place we could find near the track. We had carried with us from the last town a quantity of bread and bacon, a tin of tomatoes, and a few ears of green corn. Scarcely had we settled to our meal when we heard grunting, and were soon surrounded by a score of these wild, half-famished hogs. We had cooked the corn, and after picking the cobs had thrown the latter into the hot ashes. At last these hogs became so bold and desperate, after having been repeatedly driven away, that they began to poke their snouts into the hot ashes for the burning cobs of corn. Of course they severely burned their poor snouts, and grunted in great pain, but they did not leave a single cob to be destroyed by fire. The empty tomato can fell to the lot of the greediest hog. He, trying to get at the bottom, made such a desperate attempt that the can fastened on his snout, and he at once hurried

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off into the back swamps, muzzled it seemed for life.

It was on this occasion that I happened to see one of these wild hogs running in front of a fast-approaching train. He had been crossing the track, when he suddenly heard the whistle of an engine. Turning his head, he saw to his consternation that some huge thing was rushing upon him, and was increasing in bulk as it came. Instead of leaving the track the hog gave a grunt and ran, with his faster enemy in hot pursuit. Making a stop, and again looking, he saw his enemy close upon him, and, giving one more loud grunt, ran for his life. Alas! that was his last run on earth, for, just as he was about to turn and face the iron monster for the third time, the latter struck poor Mr. Hog and tossed him some twenty or thirty feet in the air, after which he fell lifeless in the swamp. His fellow-hogs made much of his death, and after grunting a few rapid prayers, soon had their unfortunate brother buried – in themselves.

The very few natives that inhabit these swamps get their principal meat diet from these hogs. They generally manage to grow enough corn to provide them with bread, so they live from one year's end to another on a monotonous diet of cornbread and hog's meat, or, as it is said, 'corn dodger and sour belly.' They are very lazy and indifferent to money, and life in these swamps suit them well. Books and news-

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papers they know little of, and it is said in other parts of the Union, 'The people of Arkansas don't know the war is over,' meaning, of course, their own civil war between North and South. They manage to keep themselves in boots, clothes, ammunition, coffee, and chewing tobacco, by bartering a few skins. The Americans did not get their name of hustlers from Arkansas. In some parts of this state, where the swamp lies near the Mississippi, and is therefore liable to be flooded at any time, the natives build their little wooden houses on piles driven deep into the soft earth. These houses look more like large pigeon-coops than human habitations, and to enter the front door it is necessary to climb a steep ladder. It is certainly lucky that poverty and distance from towns force these people to be teetotallers, or half of them would often have to sleep under their houses instead of in them. Of course, all Arkansas is not like this, for there are a number of fine towns in the state, and the people in those towns are as far advanced as in any other town of the Union; but the truth must be told, that Arkansas is the last place in the world to recover from the Great Flood; and that she still persists in remaining in a damp condition, to breed snakes and deadly flies, in spite of the efforts of her inhabitants to make things otherwise. She is still in a condition to breed fever, and her inhabitants are thin, and their skin is tough and leathery.

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When I inquired of a native the distance to the next town he didn't know. I asked him if it was two miles — he stared. I asked him if it was fifty miles, and he still stared. It seemed that the poor fellow did not understand mileage, so I asked how long it would take to walk there. 'Yer'll have to be right smart to get there by sundown,' said he. I then asked him the size of the town, but this he did not know, for he had never been there, but came very near going there a year ago. I then asked him if he knew anyone who had been there, and he answered that 'Ole man Johnson was there the fall before last.' What was Johnson's opinion of the town? 'Right smart,' said my man.

Of course I did not expect to find a town like London, New York, or Chicago, or even a town with tram-cars, but I must confess to a little disappointment when I found nothing but a store, a small railway station, and five or six miserable-looking houses.

Another time I met a native of this same state of Arkansas, who was well-dressed, and seemed to be more intelligent than others. In the course of conversation he asked me where I came from, and on being told that I came from England, he said, 'You are a long way from home.' The man certainly spoke with more culture than I had expected, and it filled me with astonishment when he requested me, in

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English better than my own, to say something to him in my own language for his amusement.

My experience in Arkansas, when I took to the back roads with Texas Jack and another, was all through leaving the company of true beggars and associating with 'stiffs.' Texas Jack and his companion were shovel-stiffs, and I never ought to have had anything to do with them.

In England the poorer classes often refer to a corpse as a 'stiff un,' and naturally one would suppose that the word 'stiff,' used as a noun, would mean the same. But in America the noun stiff is not applied to dead people, but as a term of scorn for hard-working men and others. For instance, one is called a 'shovel-stiff,' another a 'cattle-stiff'; then there is the 'mission-stiff,' and the 'barrel-house-stiff.' Shovel-stiff is the name applied by tramps to navvies and railroad workers. If one of the latter enters a tramps' camp, being out of work and looking for it, it is not long before he sees that his presence is not wanted. He is generally known by his clothes or his heavy boots. Tramps wear light boots, which are begged at the better class of houses, the inmates of which do not wear heavy boots. So when a man on tramp is seen to have on a heavy working pair, it can reasonably be supposed that he has bought them, and must have worked to enable him to do so. For this reason he is only a tramp for the time being, and is despised for

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being a shovel-stiff. Even if his clothes or boots do not betray him, he is not long in the camp before he is found out, for he begins to question Baltimore Fatty, Boston Slim, or Frisco Shorty, and others, as to the prospect of getting work in certain places. Some of these free spirits answer him politely enough, saying, 'We don't know, Jack.' A shovel-stiff has no other name than Jack, not considered being worthy of the name of 'New York' Jack, 'Chicago' Jack, or any other name of a city that should be proud to own him. 'We don't know, Jack,' they answer, with some dignity; 'we never work.' Others lose patience at once and say, 'We don't want to be bothered in this camp by a gol darn shovel-stiff.'

My friend Brum was a tramp of the best, but he had too much pity for working men, and was too kind-hearted to openly insult the poor shovel-stiff. But he confessed that the worst night he ever spent was at a fire with one other, who turned out to be a shovel-stiff. Brum said that the poor fellow was building bridges, making railroads, and digging canals all night, until he had to be told sternly to stop and go to sleep. He never seemed to get tired of talking of work, and Brum had at last to address him in this way: 'Look here, old fellow, last night you cut a tunnel right through the Rocky Mountains, and you also bridged the Mississippi, where it was a mile wide; in addition to these you dug a canal from

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Chicago to New Orleans, nearly a thousand miles, and a number of smaller jobs, which were difficult, but which we will not mention; now, after doing so much work in one night – aren't you tired?' Of course, as can be expected, Brum did not travel far with such an industrious companion.

A cattle-stiff is another term of reproach, used by sailors, firemen, and boss cattlemen, towards the men who do the heavy, dirty, and ill-paid work. I was a stiff, and no more, when I received two pounds for a trip, and all the other cattlemen – except the foreman and two men with first-class experience – received only ten shillings each. Being the best paid stiff on board, I was made night watchman, which really means that for the whole night I was alone in charge of the cattle – being foreman, experienced man, and stiff, all in one. On the second night out, I happened to be forward inspecting the cattle when I suddenly heard a fierce shout from the bridge. I took little notice of this until I heard a second shout, and could not fail to hear the words, 'Cover that light!' Of course, I never dreamed that the order was meant for me, seeing that I had nothing to do with the working of the ship, my whole duty being with the cattle. Taking no notice, I proceeded about my work, swinging the lantern here and there; but in less than a minute I heard another fierce shout, and immediately after I was standing face to face

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with the first mate, he – a man very much disliked on board ship – standing before me in a great rage. ‘You damn stiff!’ he shouted; ‘didn’t I tell you to cover that light?’ ‘What have you got to do with the light?’ I demanded, angered at the word stiff. ‘You look after the ship, that is your work; mine is with the cattle.’ He grew almost mad with rage, and I believe, if he had not seen the axe – which the night watchman carries in his belt in readiness for wedging loose boards, etc. – if he had not seen that axe, there is no doubt but that he would have resorted to violence. As it was, he ran up the deck shouting that he would have me put in irons. It happened that the cattle foreman had not yet gone to bed, and, hearing the fierce shouts of the first mate, left his room to know the cause. To him the first mate hastened to explain matters, saying that he had been dazzled by my lantern, and that he had become so confused as to take it for another ship, and that if I did not obey his orders to keep the light covered on one side, he would have me put in irons for the remainder of the voyage. It never once occurred to me that the safety of the ship was one with the safety of the cattle, and I answered that I had signed no articles to obey captain, first mate, or any other officer, and that the ship could burn or sink, but my duty was still confined to the cattle. However, I promised at last to do my best not to blind the look-out by swinging my lantern,

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but what aggravated me most was to be called a stiff.

Then there is the mission-stiff. This man is also despised by Baltimore Fatty and his kind. He is certainly a beggar, but he concentrates his mind in one direction, and if he was in any place where there was no mission-room he would be likely to starve. Most of the mission-rooms supply soup and bread during the winter months, and it is at such places that this class of stiff is to be found. He waylays members of the choir and the respectable people that attend the mission, and from these he not only gets tickets for soup, but invitations to their houses, where he receives clothes and performs a little labour for money. He attains this end by attending the mission and giving a short testimony relating the change of his soul from black to white. The mission-stiff is greatly despised, for he talks of nothing else, and he knows and has worked every mission in the country. I have been called a shovel-stiff, a cattle-stiff, and a barrel-house-stiff, but have never been called a mission-stiff, although I have mixed with them.

The sole occupation of a barrel-house-stiff is to stand outside public-houses waiting for invitations to drink. He speaks familiarly to all men that approach, and some of them say, 'Going to have one?' On which he replies, 'Yes.' When he is once at the bar, he seldom leaves it till the house closes at night.

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There is not often more than one or two barrel-stiffs to one house, and that is why the landlord welcomes them; in fact, he often invites the stiff to have a drink at his expense, and sends him on an errand or uses his services to collect empty glasses. A barrel-house-stiff is the most despised of all stiffes, for the simple reason that he is a physical wreck and, though a swaggerer and a loud talker, is as powerless in action as a babe. He has no wind and his appearance is false, being red and flabby. He lives on beer, and when he helps himself to the free lunch on the counter, he eats little more than a bird. He does not eat that little with appetite and relish, but takes his food as a medicine that must be taken in small quantities. The barrel-house-stiff is the shortest liver of all stiffes, and the shovel-stiff is after all the noblest and least deserving of reproach.

It must be remembered that cattlemen are only stiffes for the time being, and that when they are in port they are downright beggars.

I remember making one trip on a cattle-boat, and on the return voyage to Baltimore there was no work to be done, we cattlemen being then counted as passengers. The nearest approach to work of any kind was that two men were commissioned each day to fetch food from the galley and to sweep the fore-castle — the latter duty not to be strictly enforced. Now, it happened that there were fifteen cattlemen,

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so that one man would be exempt from even such petty duties as these. We therefore cast lots, and the laziest man was fortunate to win. It was Baldy, who, on hearing the decision, crept back into his bunk and remained there for the rest of the voyage. When the meals came, he sat up and requested some kind hand to pass him his food, and, after returning the empty dishes to the same kind hand, settled down for another sleep. One night the ship, being light, rolled so much that we were all thrown out of our bunks, all except Baldy. That same night we rushed on deck, cattlemen, sailors, and firemen, for the coal-bunkers had been broken in by the waves, and coal filled the galley, and the cattle-pens were smashed and taken to sea, and crash followed crash until we thought our end had come – and yet Baldy, whatever his feelings were, never left his bunk.

When we arrived at Baltimore we were all, as usual, without money. On Baldy being roused and told we were about to go on shore, he began slowly to rise, but it was only after making several attempts that he succeeded in standing on his feet. My heart went out in pity for the poor fellow, for it was as much as three of us could do to get him up the steps of the fore-castle. It was with great difficulty that he passed the doctor, for that gentleman happened to see him totter, and he had an idea that Baldy and, in fact, all the crew should be quarantined; but on receiving

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an explanation that Baldy's legs were only weak through inactivity, he allowed us all to go on shore. The distance to the cattlemen's office was over a mile, and poor Baldy could not possibly walk that distance, and, as I have said, we were all without money. But as luck would have it, a gentleman saw Baldy's condition and gave him five cents to pay his car fare, so we helped the poor fellow into a car, which would take him right to the door of the office.



MOST people have heard that American prisons are not so hard as those of other countries, and they think of them as hotels for comfort, where a man loses nothing but his liberty. This is quite true of the North, but some of the Southern States can tell a different story. In England all prisons are much the same, but those of America not only differ in the various States, but even in the adjoining counties of the same State.

When Brum and I travelled Connecticut and Massachusetts in winter it was very pleasant, night after night, to be lodged in a warm room. All we had to do, after we had begged the town, was to call at the police station, where the officer in charge would take our names and occupation. Sometimes we were searched, and knives and razors taken from us, to be returned on the following morning; but the police would not make any comment on the food in our pockets. After this we were conducted to a large clean room, heated by steam; and there we would eat, smoke, and chat with happiness, until overpowered by sleep. The next morning we were at liberty to go our way, without a question of performing some task for our accommodation. In some cases we were even given a drink of hot coffee, with a piece of sausage

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and bread. Of course, good beggars would firmly but civilly decline to take these things, for they could beg a much better breakfast at a private house, and they would not spoil their appetite. Some of them, being very good beggars indeed, would tell the officer this; while others, more kind and considerate, would take what was offered and give it to some poor shovel-stiff or a new beginner, a fresh cat. You must not be surprised at good beggars taking the accommodation offered by a police station, for common lodging-houses are not known in America, except in large cities.

The following incident will prove how jails differ even within a few miles of each other. Brum and I had been treated well, night after night, in the various police stations of Connecticut and Massachusetts, and one night we came to a nice little town in the latter State. We had not the least difficulty in begging supper. In fact we hardly parted, for my companion was invited into the first house he called at, and the same thing happened to me at the house next door. It was a very strange, neat piece of business; for we were both standing together at different doors, and even chatted while we waited, and both doors were answered at the same time, and, at the same time as a man's voice said to him, 'Come in,' so a woman's voice said the same words to me. We could hear one another's steps going to the supper

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table, and our movements could be heard so plain that one must be aware when the other was leaving the house.

Brum was a fast eater, and I heard them letting him out when I was about three parts through with my supper. However, he waited and, when I rejoined him, we both sought the police station, not dreaming but what it would be like the others visited on the previous nights. Being strangers in that town, we were at a loss which way to turn. Therefore, when I saw a boy coming near, I inquired of him as to where the marshal was to be found. Seeing him look astonished, I rewarded his curiosity by telling him our business – that we wanted a night's lodging at the police station. 'What!' he cried in amazement; 'what: not in the cooler?' I was quite surprised to hear this word 'cooler' for I had never heard it before.

However, just then the marshal came and, after hearing our wants, said, 'Certainly, boys, follow me.' He then led the way down a dark street and in a few minutes stood before a small stone building, with one story, and one room – to all appearance – and with iron bars across the windows. There were only two windows that I could see, and each one was about the size of a navvy's handkerchief. Taking from his pocket a large key, he opened the door and walked in, inviting us to follow him. When we were all three inside, he struck a match, and by its light motioned

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towards a dark corner, saying, 'You will find blankets there, boys; make yourselves comfortable.' He had scarcely uttered these words when the light went out – and so did he; for, before we could ask one question, we heard the key turned in the lock, and we were left alone. Brum shouted several questions after him, but he did not answer nor return.

We wanted to know several things, the principal one being about drinking-water.

By the light of a match, which I held, my companion found the blankets – two dirty, ill-smelling, thin blankets, and half a one. Here was a difference in treatment. Twelve miles from this place we were treated better, some people would think, than we deserved, but this was downright cruelty.

Ah! well I remembered the boy saying 'cooler'! For it was the dead of winter, and the floor was of stone, and we only had two thin blankets and a half between us. The place was also very damp, for no fire had ever been lit in this building. I need hardly say that we had to run about all night in the dark to keep our bodies from freezing, in spite of being good beggars and well-fed men.

There is so much difference in the prisons of America that tramps always – when they incline for a change, thieving instead of begging – discuss at the camps the accommodation of the prisons that await unsuccessful attempts. The kind of thieving tramps

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mostly go in for is breaking seals and robbing cars of their merchandise, and the time of year they do these things is on the approach of winter, so that they may either be in a good warm jail during the cold months, or else have freedom with plenty of money in their pockets.

I knew one good jail, in Michigan, that was very hard to break into. A man could beg with impunity at private houses or in the public streets without being arrested, and tramps had to resort to other methods to attain their ends. They would go boldly and take things from the doorways of shops, and would then, to their delight, be arrested, charged with petty larceny, and sentenced to from twenty to sixty days. They did not snatch the things and run, but deliberately took them under people's eyes. When they were in their much-coveted jail, they had nothing to do but play cards, tell stories, smoke, read, eat, and sleep.

There was some difference between that place and the Old Prison at New Orleans. When I was arrested there, with six others, for sleeping in a freight car, we were all sentenced to thirty days. The judge – an old Southerner, who could never forgive the North for freeing the slaves without giving their owners some compensation – this old judge commented very bitterly and severely on our coming South, to live on its charity, instead of staying where we belonged.

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‘We don’t want you down here,’ he said; ‘but now that you are here, we will keep you for a time.’

Only niggers and the poorest white people were sent to this Old Prison, for there was a new place for the better-class prisoners. Indeed, as there were no clothes supplied, there could not be any mistake as to the class of prisoners. No such a thing as a bath, no work, and no discipline. At night we were lodged in large cells that had a number of bunks in each, and we could not sleep for the cold. In the day we walked about in a large yard, several hundred prisoners. Some of the new prisoners, not yet tamed by cold and hunger, would laugh, sing, and dance, and fights were not unusual. Our food consisted of a small quantity of bread and some greasy water, almost starvation. The men that had been confined there for a month or more were like skeletons. The object seemed to be to keep us alive, and no more, so as to save the expense of burying us. A number of prisoners had gone simple of mind. There was one – a Chinaman – and no one seemed to know how long he had been there or what for, as he could not speak a word of English. I often think of that poor wretch – the most pathetic figure that I have ever seen. When he was walking up and down the yard, he would suddenly come to a standstill and, in a very clear, high voice, sing his grief like a bird. Every prisoner would be startled by this sudden and unex-

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pected wail, and a dead silence would come, which before was all buzz. But, as can be expected, this effect would not last long, for some other simple prisoner, as mad as the Chinaman himself, would begin to shout and laugh, and others would soon join him. Then the poor Chinaman would stop and, wrapping his loose garment around him, begin again his silent walk to and fro. In an hour or two after, the place would be again startled by that high, clear voice, and the same silence would come, and the same jeering would break the spell.

While I was in this prison we had a fall of snow – which is very exceptional in that part – and we suffered much on that account. But the snow was a good friend to the mad Chinaman, for he was found dead the next morning, with the snow on his body. And yet he was in a cell – but I am not prepared to go into a description as to how this prison was arranged. All I know is that I saw the cell with the door open and the dead man's feet just inside, covered with snow. No doubt the governor gave a satisfactory account of the prisoner under his charge.

Some of my experiences may sound a little exciting to men that have led a quiet life at home, but I would not care to mention them in the hearing of some men that I have met. One of my worst experiences was in riding the rods of a train, in the State of Texas, on a road that was notoriously hard to beat.

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Riding the rods means to stretch one's body under a car, on a narrow board four inches wide, which is fastened to two thin iron rods. Tramps never ride in this way, except when the brakesmen are very bad and would strike them off the bumpers, and there is not one unsealed empty car on the train. But when a tramp is safely on the rods, and the train is going, it is then impossible to reach him with anything until the train stops. Of course if the rods broke, or anything happened to the board, or the tramp went to sleep, he must then fall and be cut to pieces. All these freight trains have rods, but a great number are without boards; for that reason a tramp often gets his own board and drives a nail into each end. When the train begins to move he throws his board across the rods, and then leaps under the car. His life now depends on the nails keeping in their place, the board not breaking, and keeping awake. But sometimes, unfortunately for the tramp, the brakesmen see a train out; which means that they will stand one on each side of the train, at the head of the engine, and inspect each side of the train as it passes them. If they see a tramp on the top of a car, or on the bumpers, they shout to him to get off, and, when they have themselves boarded the train, they come back over the top to see whether he has obeyed them or not. It would be wise for the tramp to do so, for the train would then be going slow; but if he does

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not, these brakesmen will force him after, at the point of a revolver, to jump off a train now going fast. But if they see a tramp on the rods, they are in a strange position. It is no use to tell him to get off, because he cannot do so until the train stops; and, as they cannot reach him, he rides in spite of them. They can only do one thing, and that is what I, and many more, have had done to us, and it is not a pleasant experience. These brakesmen arm themselves with stones, and one of them no sooner sees a tramp under the car than he shouts to his fellow-brakesman, who is at the other side of the train. After this the two brakesmen run with the train, throwing stones with all their might, and the tramp can hear their savage yells, and hear the hard stones striking against the car. As it is, he is in a shaky position, without being helped to fall by receiving a blow on the head. Fortunately for him, they must soon stop throwing, for the train is going faster and faster, and if they do not board it soon they will be left behind. But they are so used to jumping on to moving trains, that they can afford time to throw quite a number of stones. Another thing in the tramp's favour is that they only have a few stones in the first place, and then have to stoop and pick them up. But what favours the tramp most of all is that these men cannot aim straight, because the train is on the move, and they have to keep on following the car. This was one of my worst

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experiences, being stoned while riding the rods. Of course these brakesmen could rush forward and either pull a tramp out or push him off, but they could not do so without getting him caught in the wheels. This would be such plain murder that, in spite of their rage, it frightens them; so they stone him instead, and give him a chance for his life. Half the tramps in America will not ride a train if they cannot get the comfort of an empty car – not even on a road where the brakesmen are good and indifferent as to the number of tramps they carry. Still, there are so many that have had my experience that I would not mention it in the hearing of an old American tramp.

But it must not be supposed that the dangers of beating one's way on freight trains in America are always caused by unsympathetic brakesmen. I know one good road which carried hundreds of tramps every week, and it was never known that a brakesman had ever put one off. In fact the brakesmen on this road used to look with indifference on tramps, as though they were part of the common freight. Some of these brakesmen were so used to tramps that they would confess a fear to run a train that had none, much the same as sailors look for rats on board a ship. But this road was spoilt by a gang of half robbers and half beggars. These men would board a train when it was standing still, and as soon as it was

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on the move, would go from car to car and search every man that they saw beating his way. This they would do with men riding outside, in coal cars or on flat cars. When the train stopped, they would get off and inspect the train. If they saw an empty car that contained one or two men, this gang — four, five, or six in number — would get inside. A tramp would not know but what they were the same as himself, and would not feel any alarm, but welcome their company. But as soon as the train was again on the move, these new arrivals would then begin to question and search the first occupants of the car, and woe betide the man who was not civil or refused to be searched. Out through the open door he would be thrown, and the train would be travelling from thirty to forty miles an hour, and it would be night. As I have said, these men were all beggars, for they would not make enough out of these petty robberies to keep them. For this reason a man had only to say, when questioned as to what he was, 'I am a beggar,' and they would then treat him with every respect. The men they wanted to find were those that were working men and had money in their pockets, but preferred to ride free on an easy road. The desperate methods of these men were so well known that tramps would often swarm together in one car, knowing that their number would make them safe. For all that, several dead men were found every week on this

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road, and the cause was well known to tramps. Some of the mutilated men that just escaped with their lives would have mentioned these things to the police, but the latter did not trouble, for it was all tramp work, from beginning to end.

One of the worst experiences I have ever heard of was of a young cattleman whom I knew in Baltimore. When I met him he was only a lad of twenty years, and he had such a calm, pleasant face that no one would think that he ever had an hour's suffering in his life. Two years before this he had been a stow-away from England to America, and he was not discovered for several days. So being too late to put him on shore, the captain set him to work, with the intention of handing him over to the police on arrival in America. But when they were in sight of land and saw the distant lights, it being night, this lad possessed himself of a life-belt and, without being seen, dropped overboard. He was under the impression that the tide and his own exertions would take him to land before morning and, no one being about, he would be safe. But instead of this, he got caught in a strong outgoing current, and was taken out to sea. He then had the experience of floating two days and two nights in the deep sea, before he was seen and picked up by a passing ship. Whatever his thoughts could have been, it was most certain that his mind was not affected in the least, for when I knew him he

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was the most cheerful and sweetest tempered in the cattlemen's office, and he was never heard to mention his experience.

At this office was another cattleman, who had not only been in the hands of lynchers, but even had the rope around his neck, and the other end of it thrown over the limb of a tree. A tramp had insulted a woman in one of the small towns in Kentucky, and a number of the citizens were searching for him. Seeing a man at a camp-fire in the woods they at once pounced on him and, without any questions, placed the rope around his neck and prepared to hang him. But, fortunately for him, another body of men came along, led by the woman's husband; and with him was a little boy who had been a witness of the insult. 'That's not the man,' said the little fellow – which saved the man's life. This cattleman was one of the ugliest men that I have ever seen, but he was really so harmless, simple, and innocent, that we all liked him and fed him, and got him to sing. We knew that women would be afraid of him, and for this reason he was likely to starve. So we better looking and less deserving tramps saved the poor fellow the humiliation of having doors slammed in his face, and hearing keys turned and bolts drawn.



THE art of begging is not nearly so fine in America as it is in England, for there is no necessity in that country of making any pretence of selling; and money, food, and clothes are to be had for the mere asking. The American beggar uses few words, for he knows well that whoever can afford will give, and he is too cunning to employ pitiful tales, which would be apt to encumber him with a quantity of common bread and butter, from people who have nothing ready cooked. For this reason he pockets the few trifles in the way of sandwiches and cakes, and proceeds leisurely from house to house, until he is seated at the table like a Christian, and supplied with a hot meal, which is the end he seeks, and which seldom fails. After which he returns to the camp, unloads his pockets of their trifles, and reads, and talks with his companions until supper-time, which we in England call tea-time. Then he takes a tin can to the spring, places it full of water on the fire, and makes hot coffee, with which he devours his trifles. He has had a hot breakfast and a hot dinner, and he is quite satisfied to eat one meal a day that only consists of cold meat, bread and butter, and a cake or two.

The American tramp sits comfortably at his camp-

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fire, waiting the sound of a shrill whistle, or bell, which proclaims dinner-time. Five or ten minutes after hearing this sound, he dances out of camp, humming a tune, and goes begging as though he were going to a wedding, and he is often served with a hot dinner before the man of business can finish his own. But the poor English beggar makes funeral steps between meals, and asks for a mouthful of bread. The American beggar pulls the door bell, and makes himself heard the first time; but the English beggar timidly uses his knuckles on the back door, many times before he is heard. The American beggar rides on trains from town to town, but the English beggar tramps the hard roads. The English beggar explains his wants to the servants and children, but the American beggar asks to see the mistress. The American beggar, feeling himself a proud and free citizen, addresses himself familiarly to anyone; but the English beggar, feeling himself a despised outcast, will not speak except in want, or when he is first spoken to.

Yes, begging in America is fascinating, without doubt; and it is no wonder that the tribe has increased to such an enormous extent. But in England it is such a fine art, and requires so much persistence to attain small ends, that there are few that can master it thoroughly. What did Chicago Fatty do when he visited Liverpool on a cattle boat? He asked

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forty men for a copper towards paying for a four-penny bed, and the result was twopence three-farthings – and the workhouse. Begging in England nearly broke his heart and so sickened him that, when he returned to his own country, New York Slim and Boston Shorty had to feed him, as though he were a babe in arms, until he recovered sufficiently to help himself. Blacky – the half-breed – who claimed to have enough Indian blood in his veins to make himself dangerous if he had cause – Blacky, I say, thought that Fatty would never again be a good beggar. It certainly seemed, for a long time, that this would be the case, until one morning Fatty went out and begged his breakfast, but nothing more. He went out again, begged a meal, a shirt, and a handkerchief. In a day or two this good beggar – almost ruined by a trip to England – began to take a man with him to carry the spoils, as he had been accustomed to do in his prosperous days.

Some of these cattlemen were really good beggars when they were in port. But they spent most of their winter months in crossing the Atlantic with cattle; and when the summer came they sailed the great American lakes. It was only while they were waiting for ships that they took to begging.

English sailors who run away from their ships in America, often do so with the intention of going inland and sailing on the fresh-water lakes. Other

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sailors, who have done so before, but felt that they had to return to the salt sea, talk of their former experience, so that almost every English sailor knows what sailing on the American lakes is like. On their deep-sea boats they get hard biscuits, salt meat, dried peas, and cheap molasses; but on the lakes they get soft bread, fresh meat, green vegetables, and luxurious fruit. It is no lie that common sailors and firemen on the American lakes get strawberries and cream, when such berries are in season, and other fruits when they are not. Therefore it is not to be wondered at when English sailors soon feel themselves in a strange position: they feel loath to break away from the splendid board and lodging on fresh water, and yet cannot help feeling restless to return to the salt sea and take long voyages. There are hundreds of English sailors on the American lakes that have either been in our navy or merchant service, and they live so well, in comparison with their deep-sea experience, that it is a great pity that fresh water cannot employ them all the year, as the sea could. Of course, they earn enough to keep them idle during the winter, but we all know that saving sailors are almost as scarce as white crows.

The real fresh-water sailor, who has never been on the sea, and probably never saw it, is different to the deep-sea man in many ways. For instance, he

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walks straight and does not roll, which is owing to the different action of inland waters. His voice is gentle and soft, not rough and hoarse like a deep-sea sailor's. But, for all that, when it comes to money matters he is quite as extravagant as the man of long voyages, and is quite as easily fleeced by land-sharks, in spite of his greater knowledge of life on shore. And every lake town is as well supplied with land-sharks as a seaport of its size. But, fortunately for these lake sailors, they are nearly all beggars, owing to having no work in the winter when the lakes are frozen and navigation has stopped. This being the case, most of them think very little of begging at a house, and if they are robbed or spend their money foolishly and have to wait for a ship, they are not likely to suffer hunger.

One great advantage on the lakes is that when a man ships he has no particular need of top boots, oilskins, and many other things needed by the man of the deep sea. Indeed, the latter has to supply himself even with a knife, fork, and spoon. There is no law that a man must have a bag of clothes, for there is no particular need of them. He is allowed to ship as he stands, no matter whether he is clad like a sailor or a farmer, or is in rags like an unsuccessful beggar. As far as appearances are concerned, a great number of these fresh-water sailors end the season as they began it. Some of them look far

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worse, for they may have had good clothes and boots when navigation began, and have worn them all the summer and have not brought others. Therefore, when they are paid for their last trip, and spend the money foolishly, they are ill-shod and shabbily dressed. The fresh-water sailors are not nearly so illiterate as salt-water men, because they are so often on shore in large towns and cities. A popular song would not be more than three or four days old before they were on shore to hear it. They do not return, after one voyage, to be surprised that the town has built a large new dock since they left, or doubled its population, as deep-sea men may do.

I was never, in all my life, seized with so great a desire for work as when I was in one of these lake towns and haunting the waterside. When I thought of the good pay, the rich food, and the easy work to be done, it was as much as I could do to keep from applying for a ship. In fact I made a special journey to Toronto for that very purpose, but was petted and spoilt by the many good people in that town. The first day I arrived I happened to find a green open space where I could lie down and take my ease between meals. It did not take me long to find out that the houses around that green common were very good, for I had no difficulty at all in begging my first meal, which was breakfast. After doing this, I returned to the green common and lay down in the

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grass. But it was not long before the children came; so, wanting an active hour, I began to play ball with them. This exercise gave me a good appetite for dinner, and, when that hour came around, I succeeded with as much ease as at breakfast-time. It was not long before I was back on the common, where I played ball with the children all the afternoon. Naturally, I now lost all inclination for work on the lakes, and even laughed at myself for ever having such a foolish thought. But, unfortunately, this life was too good to last much longer, for something happened the following day that not only put an end of my ball-playing, but forced me to leave the green common. I had gone to a house to seek dinner, and the door was answered by a man who, to my surprise, frowned at me. This unkind reception was so unusual on the great American continent that I made up my mind to demand, after he had refused me some dinner, an explanation as to why he received me in that way. But there was no need for me to speak, for the explanation came at once. 'Look here,' said he, 'do you mean to tell me that you are honestly looking for work?' 'Nothing is more certain,' I answered. 'What!' he shouted; 'didn't I see you playing ball with the children all day yesterday, only a few yards from here? Didn't I see you this morning holding the skipping-rope for some girls?' There was no escape from these questions, so I

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began to retreat. Perhaps that was the reason – that I had not made the least attempt to excuse myself – why he called me back and invited me indoors. And I must say that his good lady, who was smiling and laughing all the time, served me with an excellent dinner. In spite of this, I thought it wise not to be seen again in that happy green place, for fear that he might draw the attention of the police to me. So, being deprived of the pleasure of playing ball, I left Toronto, too down-hearted to seek enjoyment in any other part of that city, which was well known to be good all over.

I could nearly always be sure of a dollar or two at these lake towns – Chicago, Cleveland, Buffalo, Toronto, and others – owing to my acquaintance with so many men. For almost all the cattlemen that sailed from Baltimore in the winter worked on the lakes in the summer. They left Baltimore a week or two before navigation began on the lakes, and as soon as it stopped they returned to work as cattlemen between America and Europe. As there were scores of these cattlemen, and I not only knew them all, but was also liked, it was to my advantage to make lake towns my haunts. Not one of them ever insulted me with a hint that I should do as they did – work for my money. The reason of this is that they all considered it their duty to assist me, for I had often assisted them in other ways. For instance, when they

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came back one by one and in twos and threes from the lakes, they were always loath to start begging again in Baltimore, which they must either do or starve. To make things worse, they would probably have to wait a week or two before they could get a chance to sail with cattle, for at that time the office would be full of men. Now, as I was always back before them, they could rely on me for a little assistance, for I would beg extra on their account. But for all that, the money I got from them was more of a curse than a blessing, for the reason that it often kept me several days in idleness; and, after living in lazy respectability for three or four days, I always found it hard to start to earn my living again as a beggar.

It seems a mystery that these inland lakes should be sometimes visited by such terrific storms. One winter, when I was in Chicago, I went down to the waterside to see a ship in its last extremity. When I got there I saw thousands of helpless people, watching a vessel sinking before their eyes, no one being able to go to its assistance in small boats. We could expect to see this happen on the wild sea-coast, but this was an inland lake, and here was a city of more than a million inhabitants. It is more to be wondered at by men who have seen that beautiful lake almost without a ripple in summer-time.

Not long after this I worked my way with cattle

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on the old *Queensmore*, from Baltimore to Liverpool. When I was paid off, with two pounds, I took train for home, where I had something like a hundred pounds saved from some small property. But it was not long before I was in London, and reducing my savings. When I was reduced to the last twenty pounds I decided to try my fortune in Canada, and booked a passage which I reached in due course. But, as I have explained elsewhere, I lost my foot, which I left buried in Ontario, and returned to London. I was very poor after this, and was soon living in the slums. However, in spite of my accident, the old spirit to wander seized me again, and it was not long before I made up my mind to travel through England for a few weeks.

6: THE RELIGIOUS BEGGAR



ONE fine morning I wished my companions good-bye and started on the road. It was not long before the city was behind me and I was walking between green hedges instead of stone walls. I was going along feeling happy, in spite of a little hunger, when I saw an old man sitting under a tree, with his back leaning against the trunk. A thick staff was lying at his side, and he was mumbling some strange words to himself. I could see very well that he was a beggar, so I began a conversation with him. We were going towards Guildford, so I said, 'I wonder is Guildford any good?' – from a beggar's point of view, of course. 'Put your trust in the Lord,' answered the old man cheerfully; 'He is my Shepherd, I shall not want.' Thinking this a strange answer to make, I stared at him for a considerable time. He seemed to be very old, with a wrinkled face and a long white beard, but had a cheerful expression. In fact, he looked much like a kind old grandfather surrounded by children. Being curious to know more of him, I asked if he was going that way – towards Guildford. 'I am,' he answered, rising at once with a little difficulty; 'I am, and if it is God's will we shall be there in two hours.'

'How long have you been on the road?' I asked,

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as we trudged along together, he with an activity that surprised me. 'I have been on the road all my life,' he answered. 'My father and my mother were on the road when I was born. They are dead now, and in heaven, I trust; where I hope to join them some day, Amen. For I have always done my best to lead a straight life – I never steal anything, having too much faith in people's kindness. I have never used bad language against people who refuse to help me. I thank those that refuse as well as those that give. I have pity in my heart for the poor and forgive the haughty rich their cold abuse. But, naturally, I feel a little indignation when they tell me – an old man of seventy – to work for my living. However, I do not answer them in a passion, and always leave them with more sorrow than anger in my heart.'

When I heard the old man continue in this strain, I was greatly taken by surprise. It was quite clear to me that he had lived the life of a beggar so long that he now began to regard it as a true and honest one. Thinking of this, I let him continue without making any comment. In fact, he was determined to have his say, and any question that I put to him would, no doubt, have been passed over.

'Yes,' he continued, 'I always do the right thing, as far as it lies in my power; doing my best to assist others to get work if they want it. For that reason,

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no man can accuse me of being selfish. Every bit of information that relates to work, which I gather on my travels, is stored for the benefit of my fellow-man. So that, under these blue heavens above us! I say that no man can accuse me of being selfish and unkind. I have begged for and fed scores of men in my life, knowing that a good deed will meet its reward at last, and that what I have done will come back a thousandfold. I have taken pity on many a new beginner and shown him the way to beg, so that I can die with a clean conscience on that score; having faith that these things will be put to my account when the day of judgment comes. I have taken many a man in hand and taught him the way to beg, who otherwise would have had a hard time. 'The kindness I meet with on every side often brings tears to my eyes, and I often sit alone praying for the fine people I have met. Of course, I know well that it is the duty of all Christian people to see that I want for nothing, but still I cannot help feeling affected. Sometimes I meet with people whose conduct I cannot understand, and who are determined not to understand mine. Ah, well; never mind. Let God judge between us. We are all His lambs.'

How long the old man would have continued talking in this manner I cannot say, but he had scarcely uttered the last few words when an accident

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happened which almost took his breath away. For at that instant a stranger, who was riding a bicycle, made a sudden swerve and fell almost at our feet. It may have been that the man was near-sighted or lost in thought, and was close to us before he was well aware, and then made a sudden swerve, so as not to ride into us; or perhaps it was owing to the slippery condition of the road. Whatever it was, we were suddenly brought to a silent halt by seeing a man lying in the mud at our feet.

‘I hope to God you are not hurt, master,’ said my old friend, assisting the man to his feet, whom we could now see was a well-dressed gentleman, and probably a man of wealth. ‘You have had a very narrow escape, by the Almighty’s grace!’ cried the old man, seeing the gentleman standing erect and, except for the mud on his clothes, looking nothing the worse for his fall. As the old man was saying the last few words he took out of his pocket a clean white handkerchief, which he placed in the gentleman’s hand. The latter took it, wiped his hands as clean as possible, threw the handkerchief into a hedge, mounted his bicycle again and rode off without uttering one word of thanks. I looked at the old man and saw that the working of his face was hardly likely to lead to Scripture quotation. However, after a long pause, in which he seemed to struggle with his feelings, he said calmly, ‘The Lord

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forgive him! I will not curse this man nor utter threats; for I am in a Christian land and not a heathen. But that is not the way to reward a kindness – a sixpence would have been little enough. This proves to us that we do not know who to leave in the mud or who to assist out of it. However, I shall not want.'

This incident had happened near a house, and the lady of it was now standing at the door, and had probably seen all that had happened. The old man no sooner saw her standing there than he went to the hedge and, after getting hold of the handkerchief again, made his way towards her. As I did not follow him I cannot say what words passed between them. All I know is that I saw him enter the house and, of course, walked on and sat under a tree to wait for him.

In about fifteen minutes I saw him coming, having in his hand a large slice of bread-and-butter, which he said the lady had been kind enough to send for me. 'I told the lady all about it,' he said; 'and she – being a real Christian – rewarded me with a cup of tea, some bread-and-butter, cake, and a penny. She also gave me another pocket-handkerchief. And while I was eating, her daughter played like a little angel on the piano. Put your trust in the Lord, young man, and thou shalt not want.'

'I thought you were going to curse that gentle-

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man,' I ventured, 'when he took your handkerchief and went off without a word of thanks. It was certainly a hard-hearted piece of conduct, for he could plainly see that we were both on the road and in extreme want.' 'Yes, I had to fight the devil,' the old man admitted, 'and by God's power I won. I have had my afflictions, to be sure, through bad trade and workmen's strikes, but I have still managed by God's grace to keep my body nourished and a contented mind. He who feeds the small sparrow will not be blind to the wants of one made in His own image.'

Now, there is a joke among tramps — 'that they work for Johnny Walker, the road surveyor.' With this joke in my mind, I said to the old man: 'Johnny Walker, the road surveyor, has been a kind master to you, for you appear hardy enough.' He looked hard at me for a few seconds after he had heard this. He seemed to understand the joke, but not to appreciate it. At last he answered — scorning to give Johnny Walker the credit for his good health — 'The Lord has been my Guide, and will be until I join my parents, who are in heaven, I trust, Amen.'

'Do you like this wandering life?' I asked. 'Don't you ever lose your appetite, your sleep, or feel ill?'

'My appetite is always good,' he answered cheerfully. 'I do not turn against bacon because it is fat.'

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I can sleep in peace and comfort anywhere, under a tree, in a coke oven or in a manger – the Son of God was born in a manger. I have slept on graves without the least fear of ghosts. One night I slept on one near the roadside, behind a stone wall. Hearing some steps coming, I got up, looked over the wall as a man came near, and said, “Master, can you tell me the time?” The man gave one look and, without making the least answer, took to his heels and ran. Seeing this, it dawned upon my mind that he had taken me for a ghost, for he disappeared so suddenly that I thought he must surely be one himself. Although this incident reminded me of ghosts, nevertheless, having a clean conscience, and having said my prayers, I knew that the Lord would preserve me for all evil spirits. So I slept on that grave until daybreak, and no ghost ever once crossed my innocent dreams. All this comes of being hardened to the weather, much walking, seldom sitting near fires, and abounding faith in a better life to come.’

By this time we were within the town’s boundaries. In fact, we were so far into Guildford, and had passed so many houses, that I thought it about time to stop and beg the price of my bed, before I got into the business streets. With this intention I brought the old man to a halt and told him what I was going to do. I had taken out of my pocket a few pairs of laces, and when the old man saw them, he asked,

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‘Have you got a licence for selling?’ ‘Yes,’ I answered. ‘Well, you are quite safe, for which the Lord be praised,’ he said. ‘And what are *you* going to do?’ I asked. ‘I have nothing to sell,’ he answered; ‘but will call on the shopkeepers and ask them, as they value their souls, to help an old man to the price of his bed.’ ‘You will be arrested,’ I said, with some alarm. ‘That has happened a good many times,’ answered the old man. ‘For in my long life on the road, I have been persecuted by the police and suffered martyrdom in prison more times than I can very well remember. However, here I am, an old man of seventy, with his spirit still unbroken, and ready to serve more time – if it is His will.’

However much I was interested in this old sinner, it was no time now for longer conversation. I did not know but what I would have great trouble in getting the price of my bed and enough to eat; and I did not like going to houses after it was dark. So I inquired of him as to where the lodging-houses were. He then mentioned one, where he intended to go himself, and which was called The Model Lodging-house. After being told that it was at the other end of the town, I felt quite satisfied, for Guildford was not so large as to give me much trouble to find it.

I found Guildford to be a very good town. In

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spite of it being the end of the week, when the working-classes would not have much money, I still had little difficulty in getting tenpence-half-penny and several parcels of food, which were ample to carry me on to the next day. I was told afterwards, when in the lodging-house kitchen, that I had been around the workhouse, and that that was really the best part of the town for begging. When I heard this it appeared strange to me that that part of the town should be the best. But on reflection I accounted for it in this way: the scores of tramps that went to the workhouse for their bed, would not dare to be seen begging near it. They would not go near the workhouse until they were ready to enter it, and the next morning they would leave that locality as soon as possible. For that reason the houses were not touched by workhouse tramps, which made them all the better for those true beggars that lived in lodging-houses.

After getting through with my business, I made my way towards the lodging-house, which I had no difficulty in finding. However, as good fortune would have it, I was the last man to pay for my bed; for another beggar that followed close at my heels was told that the house was full, and had to go elsewhere. When I entered the kitchen, I saw my old friend seated and smoking a pipe. No doubt he knew a number of those present, but he did not seem

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to care to talk to them. But when he saw me his face brightened, and he motioned me to a seat at his side. 'I was only just in time,' I said, 'for I have taken the last bed.' 'It was by God's favour,' he answered in a low voice, as though he did not wish to be heard. No doubt the old fellow had met with more scorn than encouragement, and was now reserved in the presence of more than one.

'Which way are you going?' I asked after I had made a pot of tea and offered him a cup. 'I don't know yet,' he answered; 'but whichever way I go, I have been that way before.'

As he did not appear to be in any way interested in my travels, I said rather indifferently, 'I am going towards the West of England.' 'Devonshire?' he asked. 'No,' I said, 'Gloucestershire.' 'What made you come this way,' he asked – 'instead of making direct for Maidenhead and Reading?' 'Well,' I answered, 'I have only now made up my mind to go in that direction. Perhaps you can tell me how to get on to the Bath road from here?' The old man began at once to instruct me, and it seemed that he not only knew every town, but every tiny little village in England.

Among other interesting items he told me to beware of a certain small town in Gloucestershire, that only had one common lodging-house and was kept by a sinner. On hearing the old man's expla-

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ation, I was astonished. It seemed that the lodging-house keeper had such decided political opinions that he questioned every traveller that came as to whether he was a Liberal or a Conservative. Every poor beggar that arrived would be greeted in this way: 'Before I take your money and let you have a bed, I must know whether you are a Liberal or a Conservative.' If the beggar's answer did not please him, this strange landlord would refuse to take his fourpence and let him have a bed, and the poor fellow would have to walk miles to the next town that had a lodging-house, or lie down anywhere. Of course this did not happen often, for when beggars meet on the road they always tell each other these things. The consequence was that forty-nine beggars out of fifty would know which to be. The landlord must have known this, seeing that he always had the same answer to his question – but he still went on inquiring whether a would-be lodger was a Liberal or a Conservative.

When I heard this I could hardly believe it, and in fact expressed some doubt. 'It is the truth, and nothing but the truth, as God is my judge,' cried the old man, turning up his eyes. 'How did *you* manage about it?' I asked; 'for I know that you are honest and would not be humbugged by a question of that kind.' 'The way I managed,' said the old man, 'caused me to sleep under a tree all night.' Saying

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this he began to puff at his pipe, as though he did not wish to say any more on that particular subject. However, I persisted in asking him what had happened and, at last, taking the pipe out of his mouth, he began his story. 'Well,' he began, 'I had heard about that lodging-house keeper, long before I went to his house. But seeing that the night was warm and God's heaven looked beautiful, I did not care much whether I had a bed or not. So when I saw him and asked if the house was full, he said no, it was not. "But," said he, "before I take your money, I want to know whether you are a Liberal or a Conservative." "Master," I answered, "I am an honest man with a clean conscience, and in the Almighty's hands. It does not matter in the least whether I am a Liberal or a Conservative. I am one of God's lambs." But I had hardly uttered these words when he shouted, "You're a damn old fool!" and slammed the door in my face. So I had to sleep under a tree all night. However, that did not matter much, for when I looked at the stars in heaven, I felt as though I was God's proud shepherd in charge of all those flocks. Of course the man is no Christian, and it is only by the extraordinary mercy of God that he holds such a masterly position.'

In the course of conversation the old man told me that he had worked for a little over a year in his early days. 'When I was a young man,' he said, 'I

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went to church on the Sabbath day, morning and evening, and in the afternoon conducted a Bible class. At that time I earned my living as a shop-assistant. But one day I was standing behind the counter, lost in prayer, when the proprietor came up to me and said, "What are you doing now, staring and working your mouth like that; can't you see there are customers waiting to be served?" "I am praying to the Lord," I answered quietly; "the Lord, whose doings are above the common demands of this world. My thoughts are in heaven, and far away from your shop." But I had scarcely uttered this mild reproof than the proprietor broke out into the most fearful blasphemy. "To hell with the Lord!" he cried. "Do a bit of work for me, and to hell with the Lord! You are paid to serve in this shop, and not to have thoughts in heaven." "Pay me my wages," I said at last; "the Lord is my Master, and Him, above all others, I serve." Saying this, I put on my hat and coat, ready to leave at once. However, he would not pay me what was due, which was four shillings a day, that being the third day of the week. So I went to the till and, taking out twelve shillings, said: "I am now paid, and quit you for ever. May the Lord have mercy on your soul!" Ever since that day, more than forty years ago, I have had no human master.'

'You have been a beggar ever since then?' I said.

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'I have served the Lord, and Him only, ever since then,' answered the old man; 'and I have wanted for nothing, in His hands, though I am now in my seventieth year.'

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7: IN DISGRACE



THE old man left Guildford the next morning, but I decided to stay there for a few more days. For not only was the town itself good, but there were several villages within two or three miles of it that were also good – one on the road to Godalming, and the other on the road to Leatherhead. This information I gathered the night before, after the old man had gone to bed and left me sitting in the lodging-house kitchen. I happened to be sitting near two beggars, one of whom had a wooden leg and was called Peggy, and could hear all they said. They had both been in Guildford for over a week, and still made no mention of going elsewhere, so I thought that I could surely manage to live there for a few days.

At this lodging-house there were quite a number of beggars that knew one another, although they did not travel together. There was Peggy with his wooden leg, and another called Cockney; and there was one called Yank, and another called Darkey, owing to his dark complexion – and a number more. As far as I could learn none of these men were real downrighters, but all of them had some cheap trifle to sell. Perhaps the only real downrighter that had slept there the previous

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night was the old man whom I had just parted with.

It seems that nearly all beggars we meet with nowadays have taken to carrying trifles to sell, and in England the downrighter is passing away. In new countries every beggar is a downrighter, and it is a sure sign of a country's decline when beggars have to resort to carrying laces, pins, needles and self-made novelties. I could not help but notice this in America, when I was leaving that country, how good beggars were taking to other methods than straightforward begging — making fans out of pinewood, and other things. Nearly all our downrighters in England go into workhouses, and the beggars that carry a few things in their hands live in lodging-houses. Therefore, a man that neither carries things to sell nor goes into a workhouse, but can beg the price of his bed every day, is the only true beggar. But he is very rare indeed; for a common lodging-house in the provinces may contain twenty beggars, and only one of them be a downrighter. Of course, there may be some street-singers who are closely akin to downrighters — but all the others carry cheap things to sell. In the past all beggars were downrighters; but in these days things can be bought so cheap that even beggars can buy and sell at a large profit. Birmingham has, by her cheap goods, turned many a good downright

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beggar into a small pedlar, which is a great pity. Still, it must be admitted that much good begging can be done under the cover of selling these cheap goods, which are no trouble to carry. There is no law to prevent us from offering to sell laces to a lady out walking, knowing that she will not take them, but can be coaxed into giving money. We can also offer to sell pins to a gentleman on horseback.

Although Peggy, Cockney and Yank seemed to be quiet, unassuming fellows, I cannot say that I looked with any great favour on the man called Darkey. He seemed to be always boasting of what he had done or was going to do. For instance, he kept harping on the same subject for more than an hour, which was that he intended to beg himself a pair of socks. 'Someone will have to give me a pair of socks to-day,' he said emphatically, more than once. Now, there was really no need for all this talk, for a good beggar would have made less fuss of begging even a suit of clothes. Later in the day this boaster was to be a witness of my disgrace, which I will relate in due course.

It was Saturday morning and the clock struck ten when I left the lodging-house. I had left nearly all the beggars there, for they did not want to spoil good houses by going to them before dinner on pay-day. The fact of the matter was that I did not go out for active business, but to take my bearings of

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the town. However, I soon got tired of walking about and, seeing three or four short streets of small houses, I thought I would try one or two houses, just for curiosity. It was lucky for me that I did; for it happened that these houses were inhabited by railway men that received their wages on a Friday night. The consequence was that I went from house to house and, at dinner-time, before other beggars had begun work, I had something like two shillings in my pocket. So I returned to the lodging-house, made a cup of tea, and had a good meal on some of the food that had been given to me. Darkey was just leaving as I entered, saying, 'Someone has to give me a pair of socks before I return.'

After having a good meal and paying for my bed, I went out again, but had great difficulty in starting to work, knowing that I had so much money in my pocket. I began to think that I had done a very foolish thing by stopping for dinner, and that I ought to have continued while in the mood, and finished early for tea. At last I summoned up enough courage to make another start; after which I continued to go from house to house until I heard the town clock strike the hour of five. I had just then been to the end house in a street, so I went to an alley at the back and counted my earnings. To my surprise I had four shillings and elevenpence, and my pockets full of food. This is splendid, thought I,

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but I will make the amount five shillings exactly. But strangely enough, although I had done so well, with so much ease, I had so much difficulty in getting the last penny that I was almost afraid I would never succeed, and thought to give up my attempts, several times. I don't know whether the street was bad, or that I had now put on a confidence that people did not like; whatever it was, it was with great trouble that I got that last penny. However, I succeeded at last, and then started with a contented mind towards the lodging-house, happy to think that I could now lie idle for two or three days.

It was now that I began to think of Darkey and his boast of begging a pair of socks. What is the matter with me not trying to beg a shirt, thought I — I need one sadly. I knew that it would not be wise to dally, or I would never make the attempt; so, obeying the sudden impulse, I at once rang the bell and stood waiting at the door of a nice little house. In a few seconds the door was opened, and I was confronted by a fine comfortable-looking young woman with a very charming expression. Telling her that I was in great need of a shirt, I asked her if she would be so kind as to give me one of her husband's, or brother's. 'I have no brother living here,' she answered sweetly, 'and my husband's old shirts have already been given away.'

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This young woman spoke so feelingly, and she looked so charming and kind, that I could not possibly take no for an answer. However, she kept on saying, 'No, I cannot find you a shirt to-day.' But I began talking and talking, until at last she went indoors, leaving me in the middle of a very moving speech. Seeing that she had left the door wide open I, of course, took it for granted that I had succeeded in talking her out of one of her husband's shirts, and waited. After waiting for over three minutes, I became aware of a lot of tittering going on inside the house and, happening to look towards the window, saw to my surprise a younger woman peeping between the curtains and laughing. I must have stood there for over four minutes, when the first-mentioned young woman appeared with a bundle which she placed in my outstretched hands, saying, 'There!' After which she closed the door before I had time to thank her. Thinking that the two young women were delighted with my perseverance as a beggar, and feeling flattered at their good opinion, I made all haste to the lodging-house. On the way, I could think of nothing else than that young woman's good-natured beauty, and how sweetly modest she appeared with it. For when she gave me the bundle she was blushing like a young girl, and she was too shy to wait and hear my thanks.

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At last I reached the lodging-house and found quite a number of beggars present, among whom were Peggy, Cockney, and Darkey. When I entered the kitchen, all eyes turned towards me to see who I was; and when I threw my bundle on the table, no doubt they were all curious to know what it contained. In fact, Peggy was so curious that he asked me point-blank. He seemed a nice little fellow, and I could not possibly be offended when he asked pleasantly, 'What have you got there, Shorty? Glad to see that you have had luck of some kind.' 'Oh, I have only begged a common shirt,' I answered indifferently, so as to show Darkey that other men could beg clothes and make no fuss about it. Saying this I opened the bundle and, taking the shirt out, shook it with a wide sweep. The material was rather thin, but what astonished me most, when I shook it out, was its length. All at once I heard a shrill laugh, as a parrot would make, and the next instant Cockney shrieked in a high voice, which drew the attention of every one present, 'Look! Lord, if he ain't been and begged a woman's shift!'

Here was a disgrace for a beggar! Fool that I was; why did I not take no for an answer, when the young woman said that she had no shirt to give away? Why did I force her, by not going away from her door, to get rid of me by giving away one of her own shifts!

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However, I am very pleased to say that Peggy did not belie my first estimation of his character. For instead of laughing me to ridicule, as the others seemed inclined to do, he began in a serious tone to suggest how necessary it was for all beggars to examine the parcels that came into their hands. 'It is not wise for him to carry for hours a pair of boots or trousers that may be worse than his own, and which he can neither wear nor sell,' said Peggy. 'A beggar is likely to meet with a serious disappointment after he has been for hours congratulating himself on success, and it is only after he has experienced a great number of these disappointments that he becomes wise. Sometimes a woman tells him that she has only bread in the house, but he would not be wise to throw away her parcel before he has examined it; for a number of women say this so as to make a man confess that he is hungry enough to eat anything. She is almost certain to not only butter the bread, but to find a small piece of cheese, meat or cake to go with it. When I was a new beginner, in the town of Coventry, I called one day at a house and received a large paper bag. Judging by its size, I thought there was no need to go elsewhere, seeing that I already had the price of my bed, and that that parcel would be more than enough for two meals. But when I returned to the lodging-house, I discovered that the paper bag consisted of

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nothing but twenty or thirty dry crusts. That experience not only taught me, what it teaches every other beggar, not to judge a parcel of food by its weight and size, but to examine each parcel as soon as it is possible, for there are such things as heavy bare bones. No man, however timid a beggar he might be, would have been satisfied with dry bread in a town as large as that.'

This little speech was quite interesting, and I was very pleased to hear Peggy continue: 'One disappointment that often befalls a beggar is to find that a good house has changed tenants. I knew one house near Slough where I had received threepence on three occasions. But on going to the house for the fourth time, after an interval of six months, I could not get an answer. It had never occurred to me that the house could change in any way. For a full minute after I had knocked, I stood like one turned to stone, not knowing what to do. However, I recovered at last, but would not believe that the house was empty; so I went looking into the out-houses and sheds, knocked again at the back door, then at the side door, and ended by ringing the front-door bell. At last I was forced to believe the truth, that no one was in the house, not even a caretaker, and had to go away. But I was so dissatisfied with this idea that the kind lady had really gone, that, after begging the rest of the village, I returned

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to that house and again went through the same manœuvres. It is strange the great amount of faith that beggars place in certain people and their houses. I have known a beggar to idle the whole day in a lodging-house kitchen, until evening, because he knew of a certain house that was good for sixpence – twopence over the price of his bed. It would never once cross his mind that the lady or gentleman might be ill, or gone on a holiday, or changed their address for good. But confidence of this kind does not do a beggar much harm; for if a servant tries to drive him away from a house that he knows has been good for money, giving him a little food instead, he will go straight from the back door to the front and ask to see the mistress or master. In fact, when a beggar knows from past experience that a house is good for money, he will not take no for an answer. He is almost ready for anything – a long, moving speech, whines, sighs, tears, and even threats and abuse. He will fight hard for his rights, and will not cease though threatened with guns, dogs, or constables. Of course, this is very foolish in one way; for a good beggar would do much better by going at once to strange houses, instead of wasting his time at one that has been good in the past, and has either changed tenants or turned hard-hearted.'

After uttering these wise sentences, Peggy made

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a pause. However, in a few moments he began to relate an experience of his own, to show how near he had been to being fooled by a woman; an incident which made mine with the shift completely forgotten.

‘When I went to a house in Bedford,’ he began, ‘I only just saved myself from a disappointment that would have made me the laughing-stock of the whole lodging-house. Seeing a small, detached house, surrounded with trees, I opened the gate and knocked at the door. It was opened almost at once, as though I had been seen coming, and a middle-aged woman stood before me, shaking her head and sighing. “Ah,” said she, to my surprise, “Ah, I heard your step, and it reminded me of my dear first husband.” Thinking this very strange, for I had a common wooden leg that made a clatter on the stones, I stood looking at her, waiting for an explanation. However, she did not think it necessary to give me one, but, without saying another word, put a penny into my hand. I thanked her, and was on the point of leaving when she said impulsively, “Wait here a minute.” So I stood waiting, thinking she was gone to get me some food. In a little while she came back, carrying a very long paper parcel which she put into my hands, saying, “It will be useful when your own is broken or worn out. Take it, and God bless you! It is a gift from the departed.”

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Being much impressed by these words, which were uttered in a very solemn tone, I took hold of the parcel without the least suspicion of what it was. But, of course, I had scarcely had it in my hands and felt it, than I knew it to be her first husband's wooden leg. In a case of this kind a man has to be measured and fitted, which I explained to her, after which I thanked her for her kind intention. I need hardly say what a great disappointment this was to me, for it had occurred to me once that I was about to receive her first husband's best suit of clothes.

'Yes,' continued Peggy, 'these incidents prove how necessary it is for a beggar to be very careful of what he receives. If he gets a good article that does not fit him, nor can be made to fit, he can easily sell it in the lodging-house, or to the poor people that live near it. But let him be careful not to encumber himself with things that he has to throw away at last, after carrying them about for half a day or more. I have now been on the road too long to be deceived in that manner.'

Hearing Peggy express himself in this way put me in good humour again. However, what was a most agreeable surprise to me was to see that Darkey didn't in any way exult in my discomfiture. In fact, he seemed to take it as a matter of course, and my second impression of him was much better than my first.

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There happened to be several women in the lodging-house at that time, so I asked a very respectable-looking woman if she was in need of a shift, and she said, 'Yes.' So I gave it to her, being glad to get rid of it.

There was one man in this lodging-house at Guildford that interested me very much — it was the man called Yank. He had very little to say, and not only never once mentioned America, but did not talk like an American. This made me wonder how long he had lived in that country, and what he knew of it. But he seemed so solemn and quiet that I did not like to begin asking questions until he first said something to me.

While I was in this undecided state something suddenly happened which threatened to end with blood, and it was then that I saw Yank make a movement that gave me the idea that he was either an American or had lived in that country long enough to know its customs. There was a drunken grinder in the kitchen, who would not sit down, and was in every one's way. He seemed to do this so that lodgers should swear at him, which would give him a chance to swear back — for all grinders take a delight in swearing. At last this drunken grinder happened to stumble against Yank, who was then in the act of carrying his teapot from the fire to a table. To the surprise of every one, and the grinder

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in particular, Yank recovered his balance and went on, without saying a word. However, after he had placed his teapot on the table, he put his hand into his pocket, took out a razor, opened it, and then returned and stood before the grinder. 'Now,' said he, speaking without the least passion – 'Now, you sit down quietly, or I will cut you into a thousand pieces.' Of course, the grinder sat down at once, and there was no more trouble with him for the rest of the evening. It was this simple movement on Yank's part that gave me the impression that he knew how to use the razor as a *weapon*: a thing well known to American negroes, whose weapon it is, but known to very few white people outside that country. When I saw Yank standing there, holding the razor as it should be held as a weapon, I was delighted; for I have met hundreds of men, even in America, who did not know that.

There is a certain way of holding the razor as a weapon far different from when used for the peaceful purpose of shaving. If my own razor is ready to hand, which I may say was never used as a weapon, I am always happy to give a practical illustration before any men, women or children that may be present. But as a rule people, although interested, seldom wish for a practical illustration.

The razor is the American negro's weapon, and he makes an art of its use as white men make an art

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of shooting, boxing, or fencing. The number of negroes I have seen with half ears, noses divided like pigs' trotters, and more mouths than one – in neck or cheek – can prove what weapon has been used. As the innocent-looking Chinaman often carries more arms than two in his big loose sleeves – sometimes a revolver, a dagger, or an extra ace or two – even so the negress in the slums of an American city will carry other things besides legs in her stockings. I have often seen a negress that was about to pass some corner loafers who might interfere with her, stoop in a doorway and take a razor out of her stocking. Little would they think that this negress, sauntering leisurely past them, with her two hands in her sleeves, had a razor held ready to cut off the ear or nose of any man that provoked her.

Knowing these things, the reader can imagine my delight when I saw that Yank knew how to use the razor as a weapon. The way he held it made it impossible to inflict injury on his own hand, however much the grinder might struggle for his life. However, there was no fear of the grinder doing anything of the kind, for he had sat down, lit his pipe and was soon fast asleep. This was soon made known to us all, for we heard the pipe – which was made of clay – fall from his mouth and break on the floor.

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It was not long before Yank came and sat at my side, and the words that had been on my tongue for a long time had to come out. 'You know the proper way to hold the razor as a weapon,' I said. 'It is the only way, if a man does not want to cut his own body,' he answered. 'I know that,' said I; 'but though the razor has no equal for drawing blood, where is its standing as a death-dealer? I have seen a man cut in thirty places, who still recovered. If such a man had been in a common fight with the bare knuckles, it is hardly likely that he would have recovered his health with so much ease.' 'What you say is quite true,' answered Yank. 'I have used all kinds of weapons and would never think of using the razor if any other was at hand. I like the revolver best, which I was well used to when I was in America. Do you know the best place to carry a revolver?'

Now, the usual place to carry a revolver is either in a hip pocket and concealed, or stuck in the front of a strong leather belt and exposed to every eye. The man of the latter style is less liable to insult than the former, and he certainly has the advantage of quick drawing. But it was when I met Frisco Slim, a quiet, studious, gentlemanly-looking fellow who, in his calling as a gambler, had found it necessary to fill thirty or forty graves — it was when I met this interesting man that I received the most

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valuable information as to where a revolver should be carried. I was very poor at the time, and told Slim boldly, after receiving from him a dollar bill, that if he had an elder brother to the coat he was then wearing, I would not have the least objection to carry such a one away on my back. 'Come indoors,' said he at once, 'and I'll see what can be done.' Hearing this I entered and, just inside the door, Slim took down a coat that was hanging on a peg in the passage. 'There,' said he, 'this coat is almost new, with only a small hole in the right-hand pocket.' 'That's nothing at all,' I answered at once; 'did you burn the coat pocket with a hot pipe after smoking?' 'Oh, no,' said Slim; 'this hole was caused by shooting Denver Red.' Seeing my puzzled look, Slim went on to explain how Denver Red had been looking for him for several days, with two revolvers stuck in his belt. 'But,' said Slim, 'I walked the street with a revolver in this pocket, and my right hand always inside, with my finger on the trigger. Therefore, when I met Red at last and saw him make a motion to draw, I at once shot him through this pocket, for I really had no time to draw.'

I was quite surprised to hear this — no fumbling at the belt; no struggling at a hip pocket, and no exposure of weapons; nothing at all to show what his intentions were. This man Slim could be stand-

ing at a bar laughing and joking and raising his glass with his left hand, while his right hand would be holding a revolver that would be levelled at another's heart, and no one would know anything about it.

When I was leaving him, thinking how Denver Red had been shot through that coat pocket, I said, 'I am greatly obliged to you for so much kindness, and if I happen to be in the same poverty when I come this way again, I trust you will not be short of a coat or two; for, really, the holes are nothing, of no account whatever.' 'I am ever ready to do a man that kindness,' answered the kind-hearted fellow, with deep feeling; 'for I always have an order with the tailor for a new coat.'

I thought of this incident when Yank asked me if I knew the best place to carry a revolver. So I told him at once, and gave Frisco Slim's reasons, much to Yank's satisfaction.

At this time I felt very unsettled in my mind, not knowing whether to go north, south, east, or west. It is not often that tramps get into this unsettled state, for they generally have some large town or city in view. Sometimes a tramp in the south of England will take a notion to go to Glasgow, and he keeps that port in mind until he gets there. He knows very well that he is not going there to look for work, or to be helped by friends or relatives, and yet he makes

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every effort to get there, sometimes making long marches, indeed, day after day. And nothing annoys him more than a heavy fall of snow, or steady rain, to make him stay more than one night in the same town. When he reaches Glasgow, he may not even beg that city, but make up his mind almost immediately to visit Swansea. In fact, all he has done in Glasgow was to stand at a public fountain and drink a cup of cold water.

Although I was not likely to take a mad notion of this kind, yet, for all that, I was trying to think of some large town that I could reach by easy stages. Therefore, when Yank said that he thought of going to Oxford I at once made up my mind that Oxford should be my destination, too. But tramps as a rule are very independent of each other, and seldom invite each other's company. This being the case, I felt too independent to ask Yank if I should accompany him, and, when he heard that I was going in that direction, he was too shy to say he would like my company. But in cases of this kind tramps usually fall into each other's company in an easy, natural manner. For instance, when the next morning Yank had finished breakfast and saw me sitting smoking – for I had already finished mine – he said, 'Are you going my way?' 'Yes,' I answered, and we left the house together. In less than twenty minutes we were on the country road, chatting as

though we had known each other for a considerable time.

I found that although Yank was a very quiet man when a number of others were around, he was really sociable with one man as a companion. He was a clean-shaven, tall, bony man, not yet in the prime of life, and very active. But what alarmed me more than once was his bold curiosity. For he often left my side to look over a wall or inside a gate, and once he went boldly to a house and looked into the porch. I could not account for this, for I thought he had gone there with the intention of begging the house. The thought occurred to me, much to my alarm, that Yank was more of a thief than a beggar. However, an incident soon occurred that set my mind at ease on that score. We were passing a large house that had no other ground in front than the public road. As we were passing we could hear a number of voices inside, chatting and laughing, for it seemed they had a party there, either for a wedding or a birthday. Of course this was none of our business, but to my surprise I saw Yank stand and deliberately look through the window, with his nose flattened against the glass. 'Come on,' I said, in great alarm; 'come on, for what will people think!' But Yank did not seem to care much what people would think, for he joined me very leisurely indeed. When he reached my side, and we had gone some

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distance, I looked back and was not at all surprised to see three gentlemen at the door, probably deliberating whether they would have us arrested or not.

Before we reached Oxford we were joined by another beggar, whom we at once called Ginger, because of his red hair.

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WHEN we reached Oxford, Ginger left us, for he had not yet begged the price of his bed. But before he left he mentioned a certain lodging-house, kept by an Italian, where he himself always put up. 'That's my house, too,' said Yank, 'if it is not full.'

As I have already said, Ginger was an industrious beggar, who wasted no time. So that I was not at all surprised to see him, after hearing Yank say this, knock at the first door he came to. The consequence was that we had not been seated in the lodging-house kitchen more than twenty minutes, when in walked our friend Ginger, and took a seat near us.

These common lodging-houses kept by Italians are far more kind and generous in their treatment of beggars than those that are in the hands of our own people. The reason is that most of these Italians were very poor when they first came to England, and lived as travelling organ-grinders, until they saved enough to encourage them to borrow from their friends and open a common lodging-house. Scores of beggars remember the landlord of the Swindon lodging-house, who is comparatively rich now, when he was little better off than themselves, travelling through the country with a barrel-organ, and living at different lodging-houses. In fact, at this house in

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Oxford there were, at the time I mention, several Italian organ-grinders. These Italian lodging-house keepers do not forget their own past, and it is nothing unusual to see an Italian landlady sitting in the lodgers' kitchen and talking to them cheerfully, as though she were still a travelling organ-grinder and had to mix with them.

The next morning being Saturday, we left the house together, Yank, Ginger and myself, with the intention of begging the town. When we reached the main street we parted, each one going on his own business, with the understanding that we would meet later on in the lodging-house, for we intended to remain in Oxford over Sunday.

A man who is house-calling gets many a strange experience, pathetic, humorous, or cruel; for people are not always in the same condition or mood. So, on this particular morning, I was to be the unwilling witness of domestic strife. I had knocked at a door, which was almost immediately opened by a man, who, hearing my wants, sternly said, 'No,' and shut the door. However, before I could reach the next house, the door was again opened and a woman's voice cried: 'Come back, and come in.' Hearing this I went back, thinking that the man had repented, owing to his wife's kinder feeling, and never dreamt that it could be anything else. But when I got inside the house and saw that the man's face was very white, and that

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the woman's face was very red, I began to think that there was something wrong. And when I took a seat and waited to hear the usual questions of curiosity, and no such questions came, I began to feel uncomfortable. But it was not long before I understood how matters were. The woman began kicking and banging things about, and when she picked up the frying-pan, instead of putting it on the fire, she first held it high in the air, over her husband's head. This action quite upset me, for I was very much afraid that they would come to blows. And I remembered my grandfather's account of interfering between man and wife; how, when he was holding the man down, the treacherous woman rushed forward and split my grandfather's head open with a saucepan. I remembered well my grandfather's account of that, and I felt very nervous under the circumstances. My grandfather had said that he believed he lost more blood on that occasion than would have made twenty blackpuddings. But I am pleased to say that this man at once saved me from all worry on that score, for he opened the door and went out.

A beggar often meets with strange experiences of this kind. I have — not often, I am glad to say — had the door opened by a woman that was too drunk to understand a word I said, and who could not be made to understand.

Once or twice I have been asked into a house

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where a dead body lay, and have wished those people had shown their charity outside the house, or refused me altogether.

On another occasion I had the door opened by a man with his throat cut. The razor was in his hand, when he appeared in the doorway, and it was covered with blood. Needless to say, I left at once, without telling him my errand, and went to look for a policeman. However, when I had reached the front of the house, I thought better of it, for if the man was dead when I entered with a police officer, no doubt the latter would have me arrested for his murder. I knew very well that I could not give a good account of my past life, and my present life would not have been very favourable to the law. For that reason, I did no more than to tell a little girl who happened to be playing in front of the house to run and tell her mother that a man had cut his throat. She seemed quite old enough to understand, and after I had shown her the house, ran to her own as fast as she could, which happened to be just across the road. I don't know whether the man died or lived. All I know is that I left that town at once, thinking the police would want to question me. And seeing that I couldn't reach another lodging-house that night, and had to sleep out, and it rained hard for twelve hours — having this experience, I hoped with all my heart that he was dead and his soul in hell.

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To return to my experience in Oxford, I was very glad to see the man go out, for the lady was quite charming after he had gone. She not only gave me a good meal, but, when I was leaving, put twopence in my hand. And, after leaving her house, I had other small successes, in the usual quiet way, without being made to feel uncomfortable. Being Saturday, I wanted to get enough to pay my way over Sunday, and for that reason continued to call at houses until five o'clock, when I returned to the lodging-house, being well satisfied with my day's work. Neither Yank nor Ginger had returned when I got there, but in less than half an hour the latter walked into the kitchen.

Of course, he also had had one experience worth mentioning, as every beggar must have at the end of a long day's steady house-calling. He was just on the point of going to one house, when he heard a loud scream, and the next instant the door was opened with a bang, and then a woman rushed into the backyard. 'What's the matter, missis?' asked Ginger. 'A mouse!' screamed the woman, making haste to get behind Ginger's back. On hearing this, Ginger, without the least fear, entered the house and began a search. It seems that the mouse had no hole for escape in that room, for after Ginger had poked with a stick under various things, it was dislodged and ran across the floor. Ginger had not taken off his

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hat, which was a hard one, but did now, and threw it at the mouse with good effect. Holding it by the tail he came in triumph, and, before the woman's eyes, threw the terrible little beast into a dust-bin. All this turned out well for Ginger, for after he had thoroughly explained his needy position, the woman gave him fourpence, which was the full price of his bed. Ginger was very fortunate in getting fourpence with so little trouble.

Ginger said that at one time, when they were both watching the mouse, as he sat eyeing them from a corner, the woman gave such a sudden, loud, terrific scream, that he, Ginger, almost collapsed. 'Why did you do that?' he asked, in a panic. 'I couldn't help it,' answered the woman, who was six feet in height and weighed over two hundred pounds. 'I couldn't help it; I thought he was going to attack us!' However, it was this scream, coming from two hundred pounds of solid flesh, that made the poor mouse, with his paltry few ounces, dart across the room in an effort to escape, when it was slain by our friend Ginger.

After we had sat talking for a short time, I began to wonder what had become of Yank, and asked Ginger his opinion. 'Arrested,' said Ginger decisively. 'He is too wide awake for that,' I answered. But it now suddenly occurred to me that Yank had mentioned more than once his experience in different jails.

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When nine o'clock came, and still no sign of Yank, Ginger said, 'He's arrested, you can be certain of that. For,' he continued, 'begging in the street is not so safe as going to houses. Begging on the fly is all right on country roads and going through small places, but when you come to a town the size of Oxford, you run a great risk.'

Ginger's opinion was that Yank had had good luck, and then went drinking. After getting into a muddled state he had lost all thought of the police, and became too bold; persisted too much and drew attention to his actions. Being in that muddled state he would probably delay a gentleman in the middle of a street, when the latter would be hurrying across to get out of the way of the traffic. And if he did that, the police would not be blind to him for long. 'If Yank escaped the police he could, in a town like this, get a couple of shillings in an hour, and it would take me more than half a day to get that amount at houses,' said Ginger. 'But for all that, my way and yours is the safest. No begging on the fly for *me*.'

Ginger must have been right, for I remained in Oxford for several days, but saw no sign of Yank, and I never met him again.

Our accommodation at this Italian lodging-house was good, and I considered myself fortunate in not going to one near by, kept by an Englishman, which was, Ginger said, 'full of narks.'

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A man cannot be very long on the road before he understands the meaning of the word 'narks.' Beggars may forgive dirty beds, broken crockery and bad fires, but to tell them that a lodging-house is full of 'narks' is the worst information that can be conveyed to them. When I inquired of a beggar as to the comfort of the lodging-house in the town to which I was going, he said: 'Well, mate, the bed is good, and a good fire is kept, but to tell you the truth the house is full of "narks."' As I was not an old traveller in England, I did not understand him, but thought I would find out for myself what a 'nark' really was.

After I had reached the town, and paid the lodging-house keeper for my bed, I entered the lodgers' kitchen, and there saw three men seated before a good fire. Of my cheerful 'Good afternoon' they took not the least notice, neither did they offer to make room for a stranger coming in out of the cold. I could see at once by this that they were not true beggars and travellers, who are always eager to make room for their fellows. I may as well say at once that these three men were 'narks.' In other words, they were town beggars: men that had lost their homes and had to take refuge in a common lodging-house; or, if they did not belong to the town, they had been there long enough to be known.

The 'nark' is either a cattle-drover, a small haw-

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ker, a mechanic that only has a couple of days' work a week, or a man that earns a few pennies by doing odd jobs for people that know him. Sometimes he is a man with a very small pension or income, and does nothing. Although the lodging-house keeper often abuses him, and threatens to cast him adrift, for all that he is allowed privileges which the casual wandering tramp cannot like. All true wanderers hate him; even the drunken, domineering grinder is treated with civility in a house where beggars see a 'nark.'

That the 'nark,' with his mean tricks, is a nuisance to wandering beggars is seen in a very short time. For instance, he takes the utensils, which are meant for the common use of the kitchen, and after using them will hide them away for his own future use, so that strangers have often to make tea in a pot without a spout, and look in vain for a saucer or a small saucepan. He also monopolizes the fire with newly-washed clothes, and hungry strangers find great difficulty in cooking their food. He will not oblige by removing these things until the evening, when there would be less demand for the fire. Again, he wants a certain place at the table to sit and eat his food, and he often frowns at innocent strangers who are enjoying their meal in his accustomed seat. He is often mean enough to allow his things to remain on the table after he has done, in readiness for the next meal

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— instead of clearing them away and making room for hungry new-comers.

The worst charge to make against a 'nark' is that he is a spy and a tell-tale, and that he lets the lodging-house keeper know all the transactions of the kitchen. When lodgers are told the next morning that they cannot have a bed at that house for another night, and cannot get to know the reason why, they come to the conclusion that they have been reported by a 'nark' for complaining about a bad fire, insufficiency of bedclothes, teapots, saucers, or cups.

Most deputies in lodging-houses were in the first place 'narks.' Sometimes a 'nark' fails, in spite of being well known in the town, to earn the price of his bed, or to borrow it, and returns to the lodging-house for trust. After that he shows his gratitude by sweeping the kitchen, or washing plates and tea-things, which the lodging-house keeper had to do himself. The latter, seeing this, asks him to do other things, and of course gives him bed and board, and a shilling at the end of the week. He no longer goes out as a drover, or seeking odd jobs, but sweeps, washes, scrubs, makes beds, etc. Taking everything into consideration the work is not so unremunerative as it appears, for every man in the house solicits his friendship. From morning till night he is offered saucers full of tea from the many lodgers. In fact, he is often at his wits' end to know how to spend his

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small wages, for the lodgers supply him with tobacco, beer, and even clothes and boots. He gets so many presents every week that he makes money by selling them.

As may be expected, it is from the 'narks' that he reaps the most profit; for they never fail to share with him their titbits and give him the price of beer, which makes him favour that class, and prejudiced against casual lodgers.

Unfortunately the deputy has great power, against which there is no appeal. He will allow a 'nark' to cook on the fire until it is nearly out; but when he sees a stranger cooking he will interfere, saying that the fire must be attended to. After which he will put on so much coke that the poor stranger is delayed an hour or more in doing what he has perhaps half done. He has to put on one side a herring half cooked, or a singing kettle, until the fire burns.

It is a good policy for strangers, as soon as they enter a lodging-house kitchen, to not only speak pleasantly to the deputy, but to slip a penny into his hand, so that they may be installed on an equal footing with 'narks.' Men that do not think of doing this must not be surprised if he 'accidentally' overturns their teapots, or shovels coke into their frying-pans. These little accidents always add to the gaiety of 'narks,' and they the more generously reward the deputy for affording them this extra entertainment.

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I was in one lodging-house in the provinces that only had accommodation for twelve lodgers, and in that house were six 'narks' and the deputy. The night I was there, there were only three strangers, myself and two others, and we were almost afraid to move. One 'nark' was a rag-and-bone man, who worked the country for miles around. While I was eating my frugal supper, he spread on the table his dirty rags and bones – so near that one bone was found on my plate, which I returned to him – with many thanks. Seeing that the deputy appeared quite satisfied, I dared not say much, for if I got into trouble and had my money returned, there was not another lodging-house within six miles.

Another 'nark' was a drunken drover, who left a saucepan on the fire while he went out for a drink. When he returned he said that there were only four potatoes and a half in the saucepan, whereas he had put in five, and we three strangers had to tolerate his savage looks.

Another 'nark' was a blacksmith, who was out of work. This man was lying drunk at full length on a bench, so that the two strangers had to wait until I had finished my meal before they could get a seat at the table, for, with the exception of the drover, all the other 'narks' had had their supper.

The blacksmith had not paid his rent for two or three nights, and the landlady – a very old woman –

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had ordered the deputy not to allow him to go to bed. While I was asleep that night, I was suddenly awakened by a slap on the face, and a croaking voice, which said, 'Out of my house, blacksmith.' When I opened my eyes, I saw an old withered face bending over mine — there must have been a hundred years in that face. 'I am not the blacksmith,' I said feebly. 'Liar!' she shrieked, holding the candle near my face. However, she saw her mistake, and went away muttering, without making any apology for her mistake. No stranger would ever think of staying two nights in a house like that.

Of course, in a house where there is only one 'nark,' he tries to ingratiate himself with casual men, for the sake of social company, but they do not encourage his advances, knowing how careful they must be of what they say. They are suspicious of him, in spite of his good-natured offers to oblige them with a shake of pepper. By the way, the sight of a pepper-box in a lodging-house kitchen is always a sure sign that the man behind it is a 'nark.' Wanderers, however much trouble they take to carry tea, salt, soap, thread, needle, comb, and many other little things which must not interfere with space for food, would never think of carrying a pepper-box, though they may carry a little pepper in paper.

No, a 'nark' is not a desirable companion, and to inform a tramp that he is going to a house that is full

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of them, is to daunt him more than to say that the teapots are spoutless and cracked, the saucers have no rims, the beds are dirty, and that the fire is small and often out.



ONE winter's night, in my early days, when I was without money in London, I determined to enter a workhouse for the first time. So I got in line at the door, with some half a dozen other men in want, waiting for admittance. We did not know one another and had very little to say, each man being too much taken up with his own affairs. At last the door opened, and we were to be admitted one by one, an official taking our names. I happened to be the last man in the row, for I had not even yet made up my mind to enter. The first man gave his name as John Smith – most likely assumed – and after a few more questions John Smith was allowed to pass in for the night. 'Name?' asked the official of the second man. 'The Duke of M –,' answered the man boldly. 'Name?' cried the official again, speaking this time in a hard, clear voice. 'The Duke of M –,' answered the man for the second time. 'I ask you your name,' roared the official, losing his temper altogether. 'I have told you twice,' answered the man, losing his temper also. 'I am the Duke of M –.' But the man had scarcely uttered this name for the third time, when I felt my balance lost in a struggle, for the irritated official was taking hold of the Duke and throwing him into the street. This he succeeded in

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doing, and returned to us with the remark that no Dukes were wanted there, and that it was not the first time that he had been pestered by this one in particular. It was at this stage that I made up my mind to walk about all night rather than enter a workhouse. So I walked away, leaving the Duke in the open road, where he stood cursing all workhouses and invoking their guardians to appear and judge between him and their official. As I have said, each man was so taken up with his own affairs, that I should not be able to recognize the Duke if I met him again.

Some time after this, when the trees in London were beginning to leaf, and the sparrows were becoming more active and noisy in the spring sunshine, I made up my mind to leave London for the summer months and get the benefit of fresh air and green scenery, if little else. For spring sets our thoughts to wander, and it is often as much as men can do to prevent their limbs from following. I felt drawn towards the West of England, and it was not long before I was walking in that direction, and leaving the city behind me. I had several strange companions on the road at different times, who had branched off in other directions, leaving me to go on alone.

One day, on leaving the town of Swindon, I overtook a man who said he was going my way for the next eighty miles. In the course of conversation he

PROUD BLOOD

told me that he was the rightful heir to a large estate, and that he was then on his way to take possession of it. Once or twice it had occurred to me that I had heard the man's voice before, but on a careful study of his features, I became thoroughly satisfied that we had never met. He was a short, thick-set man, apparently past middle life, but active and sturdy. He carried a rough stick cut from the hedge, which he did not use in walking, but carried like a club, as though in constant expectation of having to use it on some one's skull. We talked of London and many other things, and at last I so won his confidence that he began to relate his own private affairs. He had a very rambling and incredible story to tell: of how he was the lawful heir to a large estate in the West of England, and how he had been kidnapped in his youth and sent abroad; the great number of ups and downs he had had, until he landed in London, where he had managed to live somehow — he could not say exactly how — for a number of wretched years; but that he could no longer continue such a life, and was now going to claim his lawful rights. 'Yes,' he cried savagely, standing in the road and brandishing his stick — Yes, it is I that am the real Duke of M —, and the other man is a rank impostor.'

Sure enough this man was the Duke who had not only been refused admittance to a common work-house, but had been dismissed with force. The man

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looked so savage at this moment, as he stood in the road, clutching his heavy stick, that I felt uneasy at the thought of travelling with him. So I made my way towards a shady tree, telling him that I was tired and needed sleep and rest. 'All right,' he answered; 'good-bye.' Saying this he continued his journey alone, and never once turned his head either to the right or to the left.

Some time after, when I was settled in comfort for a week or two and was reading a newspaper, I came across a paragraph that interested me deeply. It gave an account of how a strange man was arrested for stealing an axe and cutting down some young trees on the Duke of M — 's estate. The man claimed that he had a right to do what he liked with his own property, and threatened death to anyone who interfered with his actions. However, after much trouble he had been disarmed — more by strategy than force — and arrested and then sent to jail.

I will now return to my experience at Oxford; for on my second night at the Italian's, I walked a short sturdy old fellow, carrying a heavy thick staff, whom I at once recognized as the Duke of M —. To make sure of this I went up to him and said: 'You are the Duke of M —, I believe.' 'Yes,' he answered fiercely, taking a firmer grip on his staff — 'Yes, do you dispute it?' 'Not for one moment,' I said, seeing the madness in his eyes.

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After I had told Ginger all about him, and my experience in the past, we both decided to leave the Duke to his own thoughts, so as not to get him into trouble and to save our own heads from being cracked. We came to the conclusion that this Duke was more aggressive than other Dukes, and had a spirit that was violent and elemental.

I did not remain in Oxford as long as I had intended, but left on the following Wednesday, making my way towards Abingdon. As I was walking along, having left Oxford several miles behind, I was overtaken by a man with a dog. Seeing that the man was not a beggar, I intended to let him pass without a greeting, but to my surprise he walked at my side and entered into conversation. 'Are you on the road?' he asked. 'Yes,' I answered at once, thinking that his sympathy would be worth something. 'Hunger is a terrible thing,' he said, smiling faintly. 'It is an awful feeling,' I answered seriously. There was a long pause after this, and then he said, 'I have not broken my fast since yesterday morning.' 'Haven't you?' I asked, throwing the hypocrite aside and turning red, to think that I had expected help from a man worse off than myself. For I could now see what kind of man he was — he had lost his job, his money also, and was now tramping home. Men of this kind are often met with on the road, and it is no difficult matter to know them. Of course I could not keep

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food in my pockets under these circumstances, so I gave him what I had, keeping back one slice of bread so as to have the pleasure of feeding the dog with my own hands.

As we walked on the man told me what had occurred, which was nothing unusual. He had lost his job through slackness of trade, but instead of taking a train straight home to Reading, thought he would first have a day's enjoyment where he was. A day's enjoyment was – as with thousands of others – a day's drinking. The end of it was that he got into bad hands and was robbed of all his savings, which he had in his pockets.

After he had told me this he thanked me for my kindness, and then said that he would push on with all speed, as he did not intend to rest until he had reached Reading. So I gave him a penny to buy bread, knowing that that small amount would keep him from suffering hunger on his journey, even if he did not get help from some one else. As he was leaving, the poor dog kept on turning his head to see if I followed. At last, when the distance between his master and me was great, he stood motionless in the road, as though he did not know which to remain with. He seemed to know that I was the one that had the power to feed him. However, after standing awhile in this position, he turned and followed his master, but still kept on looking back. I was very

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glad to lose sight of him, for the dog's look touched me. In fact, the worse moments I have ever had on the road have been owing to lost dogs. It often cut my heart to pieces to have to drive away a homeless dog, which I have often had to do.

I had passed several people on the road, but I now met one that I was certain was a true beggar. So I spoke to him, asking if there were any villages between me and Abingdon. 'There is one not far from here,' he answered, 'which you will see lying back off the main road.' 'Is it any good?' I asked. 'Well,' said the man, 'it always was good, but to-day the people are all gone mad.' I understood from these words that the village had been visited by a circus or wild-beast show, and that the people were mad with excitement. In fact, I was so impressed with this idea that I said at once, 'Who does the show belong to?' 'Who said anything about a show?' answered the stranger, looking at me with some impatience. 'There is no show at all, but the women are all spring cleaning, and they won't listen to reason!' I was very sorry to hear this, for I knew what women were like when they took a mad notion of that kind.

Thinking of these things I came to a place in the road where I could see a village lying a little way back. I will try my luck, said I to myself – whether the women are spring cleaning or not. With this

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determination I left the main road and took a side one, which soon led me into the village.

It was very quiet at the first house I called, and I began to think that spring cleaning must have been confined to another part of the village. However, I was not allowed to think this for long, for at the next house a woman was on her knees, scrubbing the threshold. Looking up and seeing me standing at the door, she cried firmly, 'Not to-day,' without ceasing to scrub, and without hearing a word of what I had to say. She was making so much noise that she would not have known I was there, if it had not been for seeing my shadow on the floor. I could see plainly that it was no use wasting my time on her, so I went to the next house. But when I got there, I saw to my confusion a woman standing on some high steps in the open doorway, who was showing a good part of her legs. Seeing this I dared not make my voice heard, for fear she in her sudden fright would fall off the steps and perhaps break one of her legs. Her head was above the doorway, and near the ceiling, so that I was enabled, by moving very quietly, to go away without being seen or heard.

At the next house I was successful, although I could see the same state of things going on. That woman looked so good-natured that I believed she would have been generous indeed if I had called on her at a more convenient time. As it was she not

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only gave me two thick slices of bread-and-butter, but a penny also. She was a big woman with a round body, and could have carried a rose on her breast without pinning it down. She looked so good-natured that, if she had not been spring cleaning, I would have thought nothing of asking her to toast the bread before buttering it.

After leaving that house, I was lucky enough to meet with several small successes. However, it was not long before I met another spring-cleaning woman, and she annoyed me much more than the others had. When I went to her house, I could not get an answer for a long time, but still persisted in knocking, because I heard a noise of some one upstairs. At last I got quite angry and knocked the door so hard that I felt repentance the instant after. She must have heard, for the noise upstairs ceased all at once, and I stood, expecting to hear her coming down the stairs to answer the door. But to my surprise she did nothing of the kind. For I heard, to my disgust, the bedroom window go up with a loud bang, and the next moment a head, that seemed to be all hair and no face, appeared outside. Soon after that a woman's voice shrieked, 'What do you want?' as though she were Jezebel in fear of her life. I need hardly say that I was unsuccessful at that house. For one thing, a beggar must, to be successful, either whine or speak in a very quiet and gentle voice. If he has to shout

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his wants to the top of a house, or from a back door to the end of the garden, it is hardly likely that his voice will cause much sympathy. The most bare-faced of beggars become nervous and confused when they are told to shout, after going to a house prepared to whine and coax. Nothing takes a beggar more by surprise than to have the door answered by a man or woman who says, 'You must speak out loud, because I am deaf.' A beggar is so loath to shout that, not knowing the extent of the other's deafness, he is likely to still speak too low, and to be told several times to raise his voice, which adds to his confusion. He knows that his own voice will frighten himself if he has to use loud tones instead of quiet, soft ones; and he is afraid that he will either frighten or offend his hearers. Of course the exertion, too, annoys him.

In spite of spring cleaning I earned enough in that village to keep me over the night, so I passed on towards Abingdon, without troubling to call at other houses on the way. Sometimes a beggar has to call at two and even three villages before he has enough for his wants, so I had nothing to complain of. No doubt the other beggar, whom I had met, had been frightened to see so much cleaning going on, and had not given the village a fair trial. This must have been the case, for I had not been told at any house that another beggar had been there before me, and

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people are not backward in telling this. In fact, they often say so when it is not the truth, so as to get rid of unwelcome callers. Nine beggars out of ten must be silent and go away when they are told that another beggar has been there before them.

In a couple of hours I reached Abingdon. I had been told in Oxford that the common lodging-house would be at the other end of the town from which I entered, so I made no inquiries until I was there. And it happened that when I did inquire, I was only a few yards from it.

The landlady of this lodging-house was an old gipsy, and no one could mistake the fact. She was sitting in the lodgers' kitchen when I entered, but did not appear to take any practical part in the management of the house. There were a couple of girls to do this, probably granddaughters. That night a man in a blue serge suit of clothes stood smoking a pipe at the door of the lodgers' kitchen. He looked something like a farm labourer dressed in his Sunday clothes, and did not have the sharp look of a detective, as I first thought he was. However, he was a policeman and was courting one of the girls. He had a pleasant time indeed, for it was his duty to often enter the lodging-house and look around, and of course love made him fond of doing his duty. None of the beggars tried to hide their faces from him, for they knew very well that he would be loath

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to do the lodging-house harm by arresting one of its inmates. He was likely to be discharged from the force for not arresting a beggar, but he was also likely to lose his girl if he did arrest one.



SPEAKING for my own class, whom I as a proud member represent, the outlook is indeed serious. For when I was at Abingdon an incident occurred which will, I believe, explain how the workhouse tramp stands in the light of a true beggar. I had seen a gentleman approaching in the distance, and had in my own mind resolved that he should not pass without first hearing my story. Being a clean man, keeping myself well shaved and brushed, I had very little fear of disgusting him by my personal appearance, making him seek to escape my importunities. It happened as I expected. During my narrative he stood smiling for a minute or two, for, you may depend, I gave him no time for excuse or question. At last I finished, and stood waiting the result of my confessions, which had been unusually pathetic. 'My good fellow,' said he, 'I have just given the last threepence to another unfortunate man, who apparently was in greater need of assistance; I am very sorry.' There was no other course than to continue my journey, for it was impossible to talk money out of an empty pocket. In five minutes after I was hailed by a voice from the hedgerow, and, looking in that direction, saw the most ragged man I had ever set eyes on, with his matted hair a foot long. 'Did

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you meet a gentleman on your way?' he asked. 'I did,' said I; 'and what of that?' 'That man,' said this ragged tramp, 'was a thoroughbred. He saw me sitting here and, without a word from either of us, he emptied his pocket into my hand' – saying which he withdrew his fingers from the palm of his hand and disclosed to my view three pennies. Now, here was a workhouse tramp – for he was no other, or he would at once have stepped into the road and accosted the gentleman – receiving unsolicited alms; and I, who earned my living by the use of my tongue, must suffer in consequence.

But the worst charge to be made against this class of vagrant is that he does, by reason of his workhouse experience, look on common bread as a luxury, and receives it with so many thanks, from the various people on whom he calls, that these people soon become impressed with the notion that dry bread can be applied with satisfaction as a poultice in every case. In this way he spoils the road for good beggars who, not going into workhouses, need coppers for their beds, and who always make use of that indefinite term 'something to eat,' but would not, on any account, remind their hearers of 'a crust of dry bread.'

Again, he spoils true beggars by his lack of system. A workhouse tramp has not that energy and concentration which is required for success. Some-

times he knocks at the first door in a street, after which he walks to the next street, where he knocks at the middle house, or perhaps the last; and, when the true beggar comes after him, and sees this timid fool running from side to side of a street, he knows very well that the street is being spoiled, for he cannot tell exactly where the other has been. In a case of this kind it is best for the true, systematic beggar to go at once to the next street, and it is not unlikely then but what he will soon recognize the workhouse tramp at its other end. If the true beggar had no other system than this – running here and there to chance houses, at the sign of a green gate, or a church announcement in a front window – he would soon be so confused as to where he had, or had not been, that a good-sized town would in a very short time become useless to him.

To a true beggar the workhouse tramp is a mystery. The former cannot understand how the latter can perform such stone-breaking feats on a bread-and-water diet, and he wonders where lies the fascination of such a life. He, himself, though he may rise penniless in the morning, has confidence in the day's fulfilment, and he sometimes meets with a surprise in the shape of a piece of silver. Sometimes he calls at an alehouse, where a merry party is in full song, and to them he offers to render harmony, provided they will favour him with a collection. This

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proposition is invariably favoured, and the true beggar then flatters the loudest and most persistent singer of the party by giving him his cap to make that collection. Of course, he is offered a glass of ale before he begins, and during the intervals between verses he is not forgotten. As a rule he is not a sweet singer, but his voice is thought to be remarkable, especially if he sings a familiar air with a good chorus. If his hearers are half blind with drink, and incapable of using their feet, it is well for the true beggar to end his song with a dance. The most awkward shuffling will appear to them as the movements of lightning. This kindness on his part calls forth extra coppers and a more liberal supply of ale. Now, what happens to shame this true beggar, and to spoil him in the act of earning a livelihood? Why, one of these ragged workhouse tramps walks in and begs a drink of water. Water! mark you, when this true beggar is earning ale and money! Then what wonder that such a man should become an eyesore to all classes of men? He has no self-respect, for, whereas he often passes stores and houses without calling at them, yet for all that, he is nothing backward in making his wants known to true beggars. For sometimes he by accident picks up a sixpence, works for it or receives it unsolicited, with which he pays for his bed at a lodging-house. Then he, without shame or self-respect, begs tea of one, sugar of another, and makes

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himself a pest to all those who with an independent spirit do their begging outside instead of inside a lodging-house, as he does. It is fortunate for us all that he does not get these sixpences very often, and that he is compelled almost night after night to the workhouse for accommodation.

The question is not altogether without humour, for these workhouse tramps actually call themselves our brothers on the road. They stop us familiarly on our way, and ask for information of workhouses, as though we were one of themselves. One advises me not to go to a certain workhouse, for they will make me break stones all the day following, on a little dry bread and water. As though I ever, for one moment, dreamed that such a lot would be mine! 'My good fellow,' says I, '*lodging-houses* are made for true beggars, and not workhouses.'

For the above reasons I have become deeply interested in any scheme to improve the condition of the workhouse tramp, for, as I have said, he is not only a burden on the ratepayers of the country, but mars the success of all true beggars. We are often, when in the act of begging money for our beds, told to go to the workhouse; which is owing to this workhouse tramp having communicated the intelligence that he would be satisfied with bread, and that he is not in need of money for a place to sleep, seeing that the workhouse can accommodate him. For he becomes

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hardened to the indignities and heavy tasks set before him, and at last looks on such a cold, wretched place as a home, aye, even as a playground.

We are all deeply interested in any scheme that proposes to suppress the workhouse tramp, who has not only become a pest to the ratepayers of our country – who support so many workhouses – but has also brought the true beggar to his wits' end to earn a livelihood. To all true beggars, who systematically pursue their calling, the workhouse tramp has become as much of an eyesore as he is to the working classes of our land. This vagrant – whom the Law seems so much to disfavour – is, without doubt, a madman; but, if rightly dealt with, is not, I believe, incapable of being cured. That he will not work to maintain himself in a good home, with food, bed, and clothing, and that he prefers to break so many hundred-weight of stone – a heavy task to be performed on a bowl of thin gruel, or limited supply of bread and water – that he prefers to do the latter is sufficient proof of the man's mental deficiencies. To turn such a man into a useful member of society would be to confer as great a benefit on him as on the ratepayer of this country. Sometimes he cavils at the injustice of such tasks, and is sent to prison for refusing to perform them; or, the task being done, he tears his old rags in shreds, thinking to obtain a new outfit at the ratepayers' expense. For doing this he is also sen-

tenced; for, although he has without doubt earned a cheap suit of clothes, he is certainly not entitled to any – not even a pair of stockings. Of course, our workhouses are not hotels, neither are they rough boarding-camps, so that the ratepayers are, after supporting them, far from being relieved – seeing that this tramp is forced to make personal application for more food, or starve. This man works hard and gets little for his trouble – could he not have more necessities, even luxuries, by performing less labour?

I did not find Abingdon bad by any means. In about half an hour I had received several pennies over my bed money, also a quantity of food, so I thought I would get a newspaper and return to the lodging-house, and take it easy for the rest of the day.

As I was on my way back I saw Curly Jack – a noted beggar who was then staying at the Abingdon lodging-house – going to a house, and waited – at his motion – until he was at liberty to join me. ‘What luck?’ I asked, when he had come. ‘Very bad,’ he answered; ‘I was in a good street, where I have done well before, but twenty or thirty beggars have been there this morning before me, and played it out.’ These words surprised me not a little, and I asked him for an explanation. ‘There they are again,’ he cried, with an oath. I looked in every direction, but all I could see were three little children together, and one couple that appeared to be lovers. ‘Can’t you

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hear the beggars?' he asked. 'I hear the Salvation Army,' I said; 'surely you don't mean them!' 'Of course I mean them,' he answered, with some impatience. 'What difference can they make?' I said, at a loss to understand him. 'I should think their presence would be good for beggars – that they would open people's hearts.' 'Come with me, and I will show you how they spoil the street for a beggar,' said Jack. And away we went.

In a few moments we were in the same street as the Salvation Army, and my companion walked boldly towards them, while I lingered a little behind. However, when I saw him standing near them, I joined him, and could not help but notice that several members of the Army rewarded our presence with smiles.

It was not long before I saw how the Salvation Army could spoil a street for a beggar. While the meeting was going on, several members not only went from house to house, but even begged passers-by – aye, even came to me and my seedy friend. 'Now,' said Curly Jack, as we were leaving – 'now, are you satisfied? What chance has a beggar, be he ever so good, against these people? It will be impossible for the rest of the day to get a single penny in this street, or any other street they have been to.'

People will now be able to see, by these incidents, the great number of enemies a poor beggar has to

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contend with: enemies that would take the bread out of his mouth.

It is very true that in the green country beggars have a little dread of policemen and dogs, but in towns they fear more the annoyance of other callers, who are not true beggars. One thing they dread very much, in towns of some size, is to be offered a ticket to introduce them to a charitable organization that professes to attend to their wants. True beggars know very well what these organizations are like. But sometimes the man who is looking for work is only too glad to get one of these tickets, and he certainly gets plenty of work. He does about three shillings worth of labour for a bed whose only virtue is cleanliness, and about threepenny worth of food. However, the poor fellow is well satisfied, because he is a timid man, and he feels less shame in being made a slave than a beggar. He is only too glad to perform these tasks at every opportunity, but the true English beggar is a Briton that never will be a slave.

It is almost time that our streets were cleared of so many house-callers that, hour after hour, knock at doors and ring bells until a lady is not in a fit condition to listen to a beggar. It is commonly thought that policemen and dogs are a beggar's only enemies, but this is far from being true, for even the little child that waits at the gate to see if he gets anything, and, if possible, what he does get – even this small

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innocent must be regarded as an enemy to a beggar; not to mention hundreds of adults that pester people for rent and instalments for goods received, and others that beg people to buy coal, wood and oil, vegetables and fruit. Of course, these callers do not matter much to the true beggar, for he goes blindly to work, indifferent to his surroundings; but the timid beginner, who looks to the right and left of him, before and behind, is very apt to pass on if a neighbourhood is not kept more quiet for his work.

The true beggar, as I have said, is not often annoyed by these pestilent callers. Sometimes he knocks at a door and, before his knock can be answered, some infernal agent comes to the same door. In a case of this kind the new beggar would be flurried, and most likely leave the house in possession of his enemy – but it is far different with the true beggar. He wishes his enemy a cheerful good morning – although it is seldom that he gets a civil answer – and is not afraid to speak out when the lady comes. In fact, he would be the first to explain his business, whether he was there first or not.

A first-class beggar like Brum would scorn to mention such little difficulties as these, and I know well that all good beggars will despise me for raising such paltry objections. But even Brum himself has given way before people that were not regarded as beggars; even he had to give way – not out of spite or

ill-will, but through his kindness or generosity. One day, when we were both out begging, Brum surprised me with these words – ‘One beggar is quite enough in this street; let us go to another.’ I was quite surprised at these words, for I knew well that Brum would not have budged an inch if there were a dozen beggars in the street. But what surprised me more was that when I looked before and behind, I could not see anyone that could be mistaken for a beggar. ‘I don’t see anyone,’ I said at last, looking at him for an explanation. ‘Don’t you?’ he asked. ‘Well, there she is, and good luck to her!’ And to my astonishment he nodded towards a Sister of Charity. It would never have occurred to me to regard such a person as a beggar, but she certainly was, and it proved how kind-hearted and considerate Brum was to give way to her, so that she might have every opportunity to get what the street was worth.

I ought not to have been surprised to hear Brum say these words, for I had often heard him, at camps and elsewhere, laud a certain Christian leader as ‘the greatest beggar that had ever lived.’ To Brum this man was a perfect hero, whose prowess amazed him. Brum followed his career with as much interest as any man ever followed the doings of Napoleon; and every scrap of paper that came to hand, on which he saw the name of this Christian General, was read and re-read by Brum, and commented on daily. In fact,

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Brum was never without two or three pieces of paper relating to 'the greatest beggar that ever lived.' 'He does not beg a needle, a piece of thread, a cake, a sandwich, a pair of stockings, or a shirt,' Brum would say, glancing with scorn at other beggars in the camp; 'he knows nothing about our petty ways of doing business: he begs shiploads of provisions, wardrobes of clothes; aye, acres of land and barrels of money. And this man is an Englishman,' Brum would add, with a slight sneer at any American beggars who happened to be present. The latter had to admit that their country had not yet produced so great a beggar.

Curly Jack, of England, had never met Brum and never heard of him, but he was of exactly the same opinion; but whereas Brum admired the man as a hero, Curly Jack abused him for his success. Whereas Brum was as delighted as a child to see his hero's banner in charge of a trusty officer, and to hear the band — Curly Jack no sooner saw or heard than he slunk off in an opposite direction, scowling and muttering curses.

II: NAVVIES



I HAD intended, on leaving Abingdon, to make my way towards Reading, but when I heard that that town was full of navvies, I decided to keep going until I reached Maidenhead. For I knew that a beggar would not get much sympathy in a town that was full of work, and the lodging-houses would not be very comfortable either, even if I could get a bed.

Navvies in common lodging-houses receive a lot of contempt from pedlars, grinders, and true beggars. They are always washing clothes and making shackles (soup) on Sunday, owing to their perspiration and dry food during the week; and while they are going about these long tasks, others cannot find accommodation. They always manage to get the use of the whole fire – centre, sides and front – just before the public-houses open; after which they booze until closing time, and then return to fill every utensil in the kitchen – basins, teacups and saucers – with their greasy shackles. Although generous to one another, they would not let the smell of their shackles reach the nose of a true beggar, if they could prevent it; and yet, when a navvy is reduced to the price of his bed only, he hints at his wants in a common lodging-house kitchen, expecting assistance

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from beggars, instead of making his wants known outside.

The navvy is more often than not a very timid beggar, and, when he can, lives upon stolen apples, turnips, blackberries, etc.; aye, and the picked-up bread that true beggars have cast away. In spite of this, I have seen an exceptional navvy that had the impudence to stand pad in a crowded marketplace; which means that he would stand in the street gutter with a few laces or pins in his hand, a thing that only afflicted ones are expected to do. He does this on the night that follows pay-day, and it must be confessed that he meets with some reward. Sometimes a servant-girl gives him a penny through admiration of his stalwart form; sometimes an old lady gives him a penny because his nose is like her son's; and, seeing that on this particular night everybody is happy with money in their pockets, it is not to be surprised at that a number of stray coppers find their way into his pocket. In this instance, charity is certainly not misplaced, for this man would rather work than beg. If he was engaged to be at your house to do a job on the following day, you could have little doubt but what he would appear. Only one thing would prevent him, and that is the arrival at the lodging-house of moneyed navvies that have just finished a job. In that case he would not need the little work offered to him, and

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it would be the best policy not to absent himself from his new friends – not even for a few minutes, for, when men are drinking, they are apt to change suddenly. As long as he is face to face with them, all goes well, but he no sooner turns his back than a word of suspicion is dropped, and he returns to find that his former friends are – if not drunk – cold and reserved; and if they are drunk he will find them not only ready to quarrel, but to murder.

The navvy is a real working-man, but he has to travel for work from place to place, and his jobs are very often short through no fault of his own. Being a rough, uncouth, and ill-mannered man, fond of drink and freedom to chew and smoke tobacco, to spit, and use strong language, he has no other option than to live in a common lodging-house, even though he is earning as much money as a good mechanic.

Now, although a navvy spends the best part of his life among beggars in common lodging-houses, it is surprising how simple and innocent he is as to the tricks of beggars and their artful dodges. If he saw a man in a fit in the street, the navvy would be one of the last to suspect that man of being a fraud. If he saw a man making feeble attempts to climb the walls of a bridge or its railings and drop into the river, the navvy would be the last to have suspicion that that man was doing this to introduce

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himself to one who would listen to his pitiful story, and help him with a shilling or more. And the navvy would never suspect the child that pretends to lose money and begins to cry in a loud voice. And yet this navvy spends his life in a lodging-house where these cunning mortals make their home!

These tricks are not so common as people suppose; they are in fact very rare. Many an honest man has fits, the rivers give up a number of suicides, and with regard to the child losing money – was there ever a child that did not?

Beggars have various ways by which they can get shillings instead of pennies. When a beggar in a lodging-house kitchen produced a massive ring for the inspection of his fellow-lodgers, it was eagerly commented on as 'a good one'; by which they meant to say that it was a good imitation, for they all knew that it was a dummy. But a navvy saw that it was marked so many carats, felt that it was heavy, saw that it was of good colour, and exclaimed, to the derision of the lodgers assembled: 'It's real gold! Did you pick it up?' 'Will you give me sixpence for it?' asked the other. The navvy did not answer, for this question seemed to enlighten him.

The ring dodge is a paying concern, for the sale of one ring often means dinner, drinks, supper, bed, and breakfast. The ring is, to all appearance, valuable: according to its colour, finish, weight, and – the

best sign of all – its mark of carats. All that is to be done is to invite inspection, and if you are suspected of being a thief who is afraid to enter a pawnshop, so much the better, for you are almost certain to find an avaricious victim. Very few men can resist giving a couple of shillings for an article which they feel satisfied can be again easily disposed of at a good profit. I have often been invited as a would-be purchaser to examine a ring in the hand of a seedy-looking man, and, if he persists, I simply say, ‘I live in a doss-house,’ and he does not waste any more time on me.

Then there is the razor-man, with his very cheap razors, which look so good. It is generally in public-houses where the razor-man succeeds. Producing a fine-looking razor, he invites inspection, and when it meets with approval he offers it for sale. If he cannot get more than three times its worth, he is in bad luck indeed.

Then there is the man who carries a few cheap spectacles, which never cost him more than two-pence-halfpenny a pair. At night this man finds victims in public-houses, and by day the women must suffer. Sometimes he carries a few laces, pins, and needles, etc., so as to get a few coppers at places where spectacles would not be needed. When an elderly lady answers the door, he, after a while, introduces the spectacles, taking them from an inside

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pocket. It is more than probable that she uses glasses to read and sew, even if she is not wearing them at the time. In a case of this kind women, and men also, are very curious, and they cannot resist the temptation to try the glasses, even though they are well suited with what they possess. Moreover, it is well to have several pairs of glasses, in case of accidents.

Now, sometimes a very common pair of glasses will suit better than costly ones for which the eyes were tested; even as a brass watch may keep better time than a gold one, or a pair of ready-made boots fit better than a pair made to order. If the old lady is satisfied that she can see as well as with her own, the glasses at once assume value, and this is known to the pedlar, for he never mentions a word about price until he hears her verdict. First she tries one pair, and then another, until she confesses that one pair in particular suits her eyes. On hearing this the man gives his price, which is according to what he thinks the woman can afford. If she can afford to make a purchase, she does, and tells him that she can see better with his eighteen-penny glasses than with a pair for which her eyes were tested, and which cost her seven shillings and sixpence, or more. And these spectacles cost the pedlar two shillings and sixpence per dozen.

A little originality converts a common beggar into a great one. When I was in the Welsh hills, where

common lodging-houses were scarce, I found a house to my liking, and, seeing that there were a number of good-sized towns near, within three or four miles, I determined to make it my head-quarters for a month or more, and thoroughly work the country around. I was selling laces at the time, and on my visit to one of the towns, I had remarkably good luck. Seeing a long street, I called at every house and received in all one shilling and twopence for my trouble, with the sale of four pairs of laces, which cost me less than twopence. I mentioned this to a fellow-lodger, who had been staying at the house for several days. When at his request I described the position of the street, he said, with a quiet smile: 'I got eight shillings and sixpence out of that street.' 'What were you selling?' I asked, thinking he must be in a large way of business, and wondering why he lived at a common lodging-house. 'Nothing,' he answered, to my amazement; 'it was all profit, every penny of it.' This made me curious, for I knew that he, being a man apparently unafflicted and in good health, could not be very successful as a plain, downright beggar. Before we went to our beds for the night this man gave me a letter to read, and in this letter it said that he was one of the strikers at Longford, and that he had a wife and four children to maintain, and ended with a polite and dignified request for assistance. With this letter he

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did his business, simply handing it to whoever answered the door, with the request that they would take it in and read it. His time was night, when the whole family were at home, probably two or three working sons and the father; and when he could go from door to door without attracting notice.

Who could insult this man with a common penny? No doubt two or three people that had given me pennies refused this more ambitious man; but others, who thought a penny quite enough for me, gave him sixpence or a shilling. The letter – what originality! It did not give a servant chance to dismiss him, for she had no suspicion of his wants; and it did not give one of the family power to speak for all. And yet, in spite of knowing these tricks, I still continued the far less profitable traffic in laces.



BEFORE I left Abingdon, I decided to sleep out for a night, the weather being warm, and the journey to Maidenhead being too long for one day. Perhaps I ought to say here, to enlighten my readers, that what gave me so much courage and confidence in my profession was the knowledge that I was a licensed pedlar, and had no fear of the police. However, this did not prevent me from being detained, on one or two occasions, on suspicion of something more serious than begging; but I was soon at liberty again, after answering a few questions, and was soon taking to the open road again.

With all the tricks and dodges of beggars, the man that owns a pedlar's certificate — which is known as 'a brief' — is, taking it all the year round, the most successful. It matters not to him whether the police in a town are strict or not, and he is little interested when he hears street-singers or downright beggars approve or disapprove of the police in certain towns. Armed with this authority, he is a man of cool courage and impudence, and, when he produces his 'brief,' he makes the inquisitive constable that interferes with him flush painfully. 'Is that all the stock you have?' asks the constable sternly, glancing at the man's paltry few laces, and knowing

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well that he is using them for begging purposes – ‘Is that all the stock you carry?’ ‘It is all I need,’ the other often answers impudently, shaking his laces in one hand and his certificate in the other. All towns are not favourable to the street-singer, even though they may be good for the more silent beggar; and the downright beggar is apt at any moment to have the door answered by a policeman, and what will he do then? But the licensed beggar is safe.

Now, it is often very difficult to get this pedlar’s certificate, although the man has five shillings to buy it: especially in London, where a man has to be a resident in one place for six months, and he must also give good reasons for his request, that he is physically unfit to follow his trade or to do rough labour. But beggars know of small towns in the provinces where they only have to show five shillings and tell a lie or two, and the certificate is theirs at a moment’s notice. And when a man has one, the difficulty is over for all time, for he can get it renewed at the most particular town, without trouble or question.

A man may pursue his calling for a very long time without being asked to show his licence, and another man may be asked to show his several times in one month, perhaps twice in one day. I knew one man that went all through the year without interference, but the very first week that his licence expired, and

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he had not renewed it, he was accosted by a policeman and arrested. This luckily turned out to his advantage, for when he explained to the magistrate his inability to save five shillings for its renewal, that gentleman generously gave him the amount out of the poor-box, and the licence was renewed. Of course the man had begged enough during the week to be independent of this aid, for one lady had given him two shillings towards that end, and from several others he had received small silver instead of pennies to enable him — as he told them — ‘to earn an honest livelihood by selling laces, instead of begging.’ Yes, many a dear lady highly commended this fine, fat fellow for such a noble resolution. As I have said, he had received more than twice five shillings in the week by showing ladies his expired licence, but a terrible thirst was on him, and he could not possibly pass a public-house.

It will, no doubt, be interesting news to the police, and even a number of beggars, to know that men often hide their licences in the lining of their clothes, taking out a few stitches, and sewing up again. Quite a number of beggars sew up their valuables in their clothes, as a safeguard against loss; but the licensed beggar has another motive for doing so. The reason why he hides his licence is that when he exhausts his very small stock, in an hour or two, he then takes to downright begging for the rest of

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the day as he does not want to waste time; and there may not be a swag-shop (a shop where hawkers are supplied) near, or there may not be one in the town. Now, if he is arrested for begging, he will get ten days' imprisonment and, if a pedlar's licence is found on him, he will receive the extra punishment of having it taken from him, and not returned. So he serves his ten days, happy to think that his 'brief' is safely sewn in the lining of his clothes. He can safely rely on this being so, for a common beggar is never subjected to a severe search.

One of the most versatile beggars that I have ever met was Harry the Whistler, who was so resourceful that he was indifferent whether his wife remained idle at home in the lodging-house or not. He also carried a 'brief,' with a few pins and needles, for the benefit of odd houses scattered here and there; but when he saw a number of houses close together, or anything that looked like a street, he would immediately make a stand and blow a tin whistle. Sometimes, to relieve the monotony, he and his wife sang together, but more often than not she stood silently at his side, and received the reward of his playing.

The first time I met this couple, Harry the Whistler had to go to bed early, so that his wife could mend the bottom of his trousers. They almost came to blows on this occasion, for the wife maintained that she would not sit up late night after night to

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mend his trousers, and that if he would still persist in blowing a tin whistle, and having the bottom of his trousers torn by dogs, instead of going in for chanting, peddling, or straight begging, she would no longer travel with him. After he had cursed dogs to his heart's content, he confessed that it was no more pleasure for him to go to bed early than it was for her to sit up late and mend his trousers, and that in the future he would cease playing as soon as his notes were answered by a dog's bark.

In two or three days after leaving Abingdon I reached Maidenhead, where I intended to stay overnight. There happened to be a good lodging-house in that town, which I had been told of long before I got there. I arrived at Maidenhead about four o'clock in the afternoon and went at once to the lodging-house and paid for a bed.

When I entered the kitchen I was surprised that although there were between twenty and thirty beggars present, not one curious eye turned towards me. However, I soon saw the reason, for in the middle of the room I saw a very small man standing with his shirt-sleeves tucked up and glaring around at the various lodgers. He was a little bit of a fellow, about thirty years of age: not only short, but as slight as any boy that sings treble in a church choir. Most of the lodgers were laughing when I entered, and others were puffing silently at their

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pipes, leaning on the tables and regarding the little fellow with lazy interest. Before I could be seated this little man cried in a clear, high voice, 'I could wipe the floor with any man in this house.' Saying this he put himself in a fighting attitude and waited. Much laughter greeted these words, but of course no one took the little fellow seriously. At last, not succeeding in getting an opponent, he put on his waistcoat and coat and went out. As he did so it was clear to every one that he was something the worse for drink.

After the little fellow had gone there was, of course, much laughter, and I gathered from the talk of those around that he had been amusing them in this way for a considerable time. However, the little man had not been gone more than five minutes when into the kitchen walked a very tall man, whom I judged to be over six feet in height. He at once began to look around, and then asked, addressing no one in particular, 'Where's Jack the Giant-Killer?' 'Gone out for another drink,' answered a man sitting at my side. The man had scarcely finished making this answer before the little man returned. And the little man had no sooner set eyes on the big man than he clenched his fist, rushed at him and struck him in the back with all his power. Of course the big fellow was not knocked down, he did not appear to even lose his balance. Before he

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could turn his head he seemed to know who had struck him, for he began to say at once, 'Why don't you be quiet; what's the matter with you?' 'If you are a man,' cried the little fellow, 'take off your coat and let us see what you can do.' Saying this he stripped again, throwing his coat and waistcoat on the kitchen floor and tucking up his sleeves. 'I have already told you to be quiet,' said the big fellow, speaking in a warning voice. 'You have told me what!' screamed the other, making a wild rush at his big companion. 'You little idiot!' said the big man, catching the other in his arms; 'you have asked for it, and you shall now have it.' The little fellow struggled, but it was of no use, for the big man carried him to a seat and spanked him across his knee, in the same way as a mother would spank her child. He then picked him up, still struggling, and carried him off to bed. Whether he used threats or coaxed when he got the little fellow to bed I cannot say, but it is certain that he came back to the kitchen alone, and that his small companion was seen no more that night. The big fellow did not seem to have lost the least patience, but said quietly, when he had returned to the kitchen, 'He's a nice little fellow when he's sober, but every time he tastes ale he carries on in that way, and I have to put him to bed. It does not happen often, or we would not have been travellers together for over four years.' It seemed a

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strange friendship, between men so dissimilar: one a very big good-natured fellow, and the other so small, so excitable and so quarrelsome. The next morning they appeared to be the best of friends, without any knowledge of the night before.

At this common lodging-house in Maidenhead I had my attention drawn to another strange couple that interested me deeply. It was a man and his wife, he of the uneducated navvy type, and she apparently a lady of some culture. I had met hundreds of women in different common lodging-houses, but I had never met one that impressed me so much as this woman. All the others seemed to have come from the housemaid class, but this woman appeared to be a well-bred lady. She moved about the kitchen with so much grace and with such sweet smiles that some of the lodgers she spoke to must have felt as though they were being patronized. The other women present appeared to regard her as superior to themselves and did not seem in the least jealous of her better manners, which they could see were natural and not affected. Her husband was dressed as a navvy, a big, simple fellow, with a good-natured expression, and who was very quiet. He only differed from the ordinary navvy in one thing – when he spoke he did not use bad language, which no doubt was through the influence of his superior wife. At this time the man was out of work, and she was

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supporting him by selling needlework of her own make. However he did not seem to be the kind of man that would live on a woman's work, but one that would work to maintain her, whenever he had a chance. This man and woman were not proper roadsters – this could be seen by how clean and tidy she kept herself. After he had finished a job, they did not go drinking, but travelled from town to town, when her needlework would be a help to his savings until he got more work. In fact, it was not unusual for them to take a train, or, to use the words of a true beggar, 'take a rattler.' I gathered these items from her own conversation, for I happened to sit at the same table with them, and she had a very easy, familiar way about her.

This couple, Portsmouth Norah and her husband Navvy Jack, is the only couple that I have met in a common lodging-house that I believe could be assisted without fear of them bringing disgrace on themselves and those that befriended them. They seemed to have been forced to the road owing to the husband's unsettled kind of work, for very few navvies can remain long in one place. However, what surprised me more than anything else was the thought of how such a couple came together in the first place. Certainly he was a superior navvy in that he did not swear or drink, and was gentle and quiet, but the commonest woman would have expected

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these traits in a man, much less a lady of education, as she appeared to be.

Although this lodging-house at Maidenhead was comfortable, with its good fire, a roomy kitchen with ample seating accommodation, yet, for all that, I regret to say that the place was spoiled entirely by the presence of a 'handy' man, who was something of a 'nark' also. It was almost impossible to do anything – cook, sew, shave, or anything else – without this man coming forward with suggestions or practical help, for which he expected some reward, of course.

The handy man is to be found in all places where men are either too poor to pay for professional experience, or, not being too poor, yet live in out-of-the-way camps which women have never visited, and which are too temporary for tradesmen to open business. The former places are common lodging-houses, where the handy man volunteers his services as a laundryman, cobbler, barber, cook, tailor, etc. In fact, according to his boasted qualifications, it would be far more interesting to learn what he cannot do than what he can. He has learnt all these trades with his eye, and, when about to practise, his confidence is unshaken. Says he, 'I will shave you, and you will not feel the razor going over your face.' And when he covers your face with blood he blames pimples, which you never had, and expects to be thanked for removing them; for in

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addition to shaving you, has he not also performed a successful surgical operation?

In this manner he earns a shilling or more a day, and he is not agreeable that any man should shave himself, sew or wash clothes, or he would not earn the price of his bed and board, and gifts of ale and tobacco. If he sees me preparing to shave, he makes a rush and possesses himself of the razor, and commands me to be seated. There is nothing else to do but obey, for he takes me by the shoulder and leads me to a seat; he then forces me down and pushes my head back until it is within an inch of the nape of my neck. For this indignity I give him a penny, and then, while I am washing, he shouts in a loud voice, 'Next!' He never thinks that I would object to my soap, brush, and razor being used on other faces; and truly it is for that reason – and not economy – that I shave myself. But thank goodness the kitchen is almost empty, and there is no answer to his 'Next.' Then, with an eye to future custom, he carefully wipes the razor, dries it on his clothes, washes the brush, rolls the soap in a piece of clean paper, and returns them to the owner. After which he again borrows the razor, for he has seen a hair on the throat, and, as he says, 'A good craftsman likes to make a neat job.' He then laments the number of pimples that had to be removed, and wanders in quest of other jobs.

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Probably he now sees a man in the act of repairing a boot. If he does, he rushes in that direction, wrestles with the man for the boot, and is soon heard hammering with all his might. He makes so much noise that any man would think him a man of confidence and great experience. Of course he blames the tools for every mistake, and says modestly that no man living could do better under the conditions. For rendering this assistance he receives two or three coppers, and perhaps a drink also.

And now he sees a man whose eyesight is bad endeavouring to thread a needle. 'Allow me,' cries the handy man, springing forward and wrestling with the other for the needle and thread. Getting possession of these, in spite of the other's loud-spoken annoyance, he, instead of returning them, demands the article to be sewn. 'No, thank you,' says the other; 'I can manage it very well myself.' With much reluctance the handy man surrenders, and then begs a pipeful of tobacco for threading the needle. But he still keeps his eye on the other, and when he sees him take up a shirt and a patch, the handy man again springs forward and in a loud voice commands the other to halt. 'I,' says he, 'have a piece of stuff that exactly matches your shirt, whereas yours is far different.' Snatching the shirt from the other's hand, he disappears for a moment, and then reappears with a piece of stuff that, it must

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be admitted, is a better match. The other, being well pleased at this, says: 'If you don't mind waiting we will have a drink after I have done this job.' The handy man, hearing this, and not feeling inclined to wait long, also thinking that an additional kindness would meet its reward in an additional drink, answers: 'You had better let me do it, for by the way you hold the needle it is plain that you are not used to such work.' The other, seeing that he has already given tobacco, and is compromised for a drink, is now quite willing to have the handy man's assistance. 'Now,' says he, when the job is done, where every stitch is seen to lie in its own deep valley surrounded by hills — 'Now,' says he, 'all it requires is to be pressed with a hot flat-iron, after which you need not be ashamed to show it to the best tailor in the land. If you like, we will use the interval, while the iron is in the fire, for a little refreshment.'

The handy man, though he often spoils good things which, with a little professional care, might be made almost as good as new, is not to be altogether despised. For though he is not the handy man of his claim, he certainly deserves credit for keeping handy tools. Wherever he finds discarded boots or clothes, he cuts patches out and saves them for emergency. He always keeps a pair of scissors, a razor, strap, brush, pincers, and many other useful things, and

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he is seldom short of pins, needles, or nails. But to one who is determined to do without his services, he is often a very unpleasant spectator. For instance, if I am shaving, the handy man stands two feet away glaring like a discomfited demon; and when I stand before the glass, and the razor is on my face, he stands behind my back, so that to my confusion and danger two faces are reflected. If he sees a man who has persistently declined his aid, and who is in the act of sewing, the handy man either stands in the light, or stands seemingly counting the stitches, critically watching, until the man must either prick his finger or spoil his work. When he sees a man repairing a boot he says sarcastically: 'Take care you strike the right nail.' The other laughs, but proves his confusion when the next instant he strikes off the nail of his left-hand thumb.

The handy man even prescribes for the sick, but in nine cases out of ten his cure is an intoxicant, the time being immaterial. I allowed him to cut my hair, and he seemed well pleased at the result; but after one glance in the glass, I decided not to remove my cap for three weeks, whether at meals or not.

As there was a handy man of this kind staying at Maidenhead, I soon decided to make my way towards High Wycombe, where I intended to remain for a few days, providing the lodging-house was good and comfortable.



THE next morning I left Maidenhead, making my way towards High Wycombe. When I reached Cookham, I had the unpleasant experience of having to pay a halfpenny toll to cross a bridge, which is heartrending to a beggar. In fact, no beggar would think of paying a halfpenny toll if there was the least chance of begging it. But this bridge had so few passengers that it would be folly to lie in wait for them. However, I did well between Cookham and High Wycombe, and reached the latter place before night. The common lodging-houses in this town were all public-houses, so I went to one called the *Goat*.

I had heard beggars speak well of Wycombe, because of the number of villages close to it, lying back in the hills and within an easy distance. The town itself was not up to much, because chair-making, its chief industry, was in a bad state. This being the case, I thought I would not trouble the town itself, but go to the surrounding villages.

At this house there was a beggar called 'Ferny,' who had been there for a long time and knew the surrounding country well. Seeing that he was inclined to be friendly, I paid for a glass of beer for him, which turned out to be very wise on my

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part. For he began to tell me the names of the various villages, how to reach them, their distance, and what they were worth. He also told me how, after calling at one village, I could without much trouble call at another on my way back, which was well worth knowing. In fact, by following Ferny's instructions I could do well for several days. Ferny was not a downright beggar, or he could not have begged the same villages so many times. He had several ways of calling them, sometimes with ferns – hence his name – sometimes with artificial flowers, and sometimes as a rag-and-bone man. The latter was his chief support, for he always carried a bag in readiness for old clothes, bones, bottles, jars, and other things. But he was really a beggar, for he was never prepared to pay for anything that came his way. His first object was to find out if people had those things for sale, after which he made it his business to get them for nothing. He was always very ragged himself, so that the poorest people could not very well regard him as a merchant.

Having Ferny's instructions, I started the next morning for a village two miles from the town, which he assured me was one of the best. There were very few houses on the way, with the exception of those in the town, so that I called at none until I was almost in the village. Judging from its scattered size, it would take me two or three hours to go

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to every house, as I intended to, and I knew that I would get enough in that time to satisfy me for that one day.

In about two hours and three-quarters I had worked the village thoroughly and was on my way back to Wycombe, having in my pockets one and elevenpence-halfpenny and several parcels of food.

Now, it happened that on my way to the village I had passed a nice little cottage that I thought to have called at, but did not, thinking to do so on my return. Therefore, on my way back, I knocked at the door of this cottage, which was soon answered by a man. I was rather taken back by the appearance of this man, for he was dressed in good cloth, whereas I had expected to see working people. However, I lost no time in letting him know my wants, telling him that I was trying to get the price of my bed. 'Here are a few pennies for you,' he said at once, putting threepence in my hand, to my surprise.

As I was leaving, thanking him very much, he said, 'Do you want something to eat as well?' Now, I did not like to take advantage of this man's generosity, so I told him at once that although I had not yet had my dinner, I was not without it in my pockets, and had only been waiting for a chance to eat it. 'Keep that for your supper,' he said, 'and come indoors.' When I was seated at the table, he placed

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a large quantity of plain food before me, telling me to get rid of the whole lot if I could manage it, as he was 'damn well sick of the simple life.'

While I was eating, he was looking at me with curiosity, as though he were wondering whether I would understand him if he spoke the thoughts on his mind. At last he said, as though feeling his way, 'Of course you know nothing about books. I don't suppose you ever heard of a man called Thoreau?' 'Oh, yes,' I answered; 'I know his name, but have not read his books. However, I not only know the name of one of them, but I also know the nature of it: it is called *Walden*, and deals with a simple life in the woods.'

When the man heard this his face brightened, for he began to think that he had a listener that would understand what he said. After a short pause he began, and I will give his conclusions without my own comments. What I said was not of much account, for it only echoed his own thoughts, so as to please him.

'This simple life has become unbearable,' he began. 'After having had a dinner of bread and cheese and nuts, I go out walking, and am then mocked and teased to distraction by the smell of savoury stews in one-roomed cottages. Can a man enjoy the charms of Nature when his body is in this state? I lie upon a straw mattress which breaks, and the

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loose straws stick into my flesh: can a man enjoy sleep under these conditions? I sit upon a wooden chair that, after half an hour's sitting, scrapes my very bones. No wonder I must throw myself flat on the grass every time I get a chance, which makes the children run for their lives, thinking I am a tramp. The simple life, indeed! It is madness, and nothing else – except it is to break pleasant habits so as to return to them with a better appetite. I don't believe that any man would live the simple life from choice. We hear of men doing so from necessity, and telling in cold unimpassioned words how happy they are. As for myself, I would rather have the bellyache after enjoying a rich meal than feel painless but dull after a plain meal I did not enjoy. Eat as much as you can, my friend, and when you can eat no more take the rest with you, for I am heartily sick of the look of it.' 'Have you anything to drink?' I asked. 'Nothing but water,' he answered bitterly; 'for I am trying to lead the simple life.' 'Water is better than nothing,' I said – so he got me a large glass of water.

'My simple life in the country,' he continued, 'forces me about every three weeks to go to London with no other object than to eat; without the least desire to see pictures, statues, or fine buildings. And please remember that I am considered to be a man of some culture. A good hot meal, ready-cooked for

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me, is a finer sight than painted canvas or any carved stone. Certainly I like a glass of fresh water, but I do not scorn wine and ale, and that's why I can no longer stand this simple life.'

'The simple life is madness, and nothing else,' I said, interrupting him.

'Of course it is,' he answered, nodding approval. 'For where is the pleasure and value of man's old age that he should prolong it for many years and sacrifice the pleasures of life to enable him to do so? Who wants his ten or fifteen years after sixty that he should make so much effort to reach them? It is damn selfishness, and nothing else. It is better for his family if he does not reach a great age, and it is certainly better for the world. Let me enjoy the pleasures of life until I am about sixty-five, and I am then well satisfied to go. As for living a hard, cold life – drinking water instead of wine, giving up tobacco, eating plain food until I ruin my appetite, keeping from theatres so as to go early to bed – to sacrifice these pleasures so as to live a few more years that have no enjoyment in them – all this is rot, my friend, utter rot, nonsense and the worst of madness. I have no desire to be either a drunkard or a glutton, but I *will* have my share of luxury. Let my life be like a silk thread, and not a piece of common elastic of the same length, which I endeavour to stretch to the utmost. Misers live long, by eating plain food

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and very little of it – but what a wretched life it is! What! have you finished already?’ ‘Yes, thank you,’ I answered; ‘but I will take what is left and enjoy it in the lodging-house, where I will make a pot of tea. To tell you the truth, cold water chills my stomach, and it is a wonder for me to drink it.’ ‘Of course it does,’ he said with deep sympathy. ‘A beggar’s life in this country is hard indeed,’ I continued; ‘for it is nothing but dry food from morning till night, and from day to day.’ ‘Have you been in other countries, then?’ he asked, beginning to show a new interest. ‘I have been in America,’ I answered. ‘People live better there than in England, don’t they?’ he asked. Now, this question took me quite unawares, for before I knew what I was doing I began to tell him of some of my begging experiences in that country. ‘Yes,’ I said, warming to my subject; ‘in that country hundreds of houses in the suburbs of a city had meals ready cooked for me. And if I was too tired to walk beyond the public thoroughfares, all I had to do was to stand outside a restaurant and stop a customer as he was going in, saying, “Any chance for a meal?” In nine cases out of ten he would answer yes. After which I would follow him inside, seat myself at a table, take up the bill of fare, read it deliberately, and then give the waiter my order, which would be for a meal of courses. And it was not unusual for one of these

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customers to give me the price of my next meal before I left him.'

While I was saying this the man was looking at me with what I thought to be amazement. At last he said, rather timidly, 'Perhaps you would not care to be bothered with that?' pointing to half a loaf of brown bread and a piece of cheese. 'Of course I care to take it,' I answered at once; 'I am in England now, and not America.' Hearing this he went to a corner of the room and found a large brown paper bag. Taking this bag, I placed the bread at the bottom and the cheese on the top of it. But just as I was about to close the mouth of the bag, he said, 'Perhaps you would like a little more, for I am off to London to-night - to hell with the simple life!' Saying this he went to a cupboard, and then brought back three eggs and four large apples, which I placed in the bag. After thanking him again I left, well satisfied with my day's work.

When I reached the lodging-house I saw that Ferny had already arrived, not having had much good luck. He appeared quite willing to share mine. I came to the conclusion that he would not have offered so much good information if he had not expected to profit in the end. No doubt the people were getting tired of his face, for he had been in that part of the country for a long time. I remember

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how he had said, that very morning, that he hardly knew where to go.

When I told him about the man leading the simple life, and my experience, he seemed astonished. In fact, he was considerably upset, saying that I had not taken the full advantage of a good thing, as he himself would have done. 'What about his bottles, glasses, cups and saucers?' he demanded. 'I did not ask him about them,' I answered. 'Good God!' cried Ferny, speaking in a voice of anguish – 'Good God! What about his old clobber? Didn't you ask him that?' he continued, looking at me wide-eyed, as though he began to doubt my sanity. 'I believe I have done very well as it is,' I said sharply, feeling annoyed at these questions. 'I must be at that house the first thing in the morning,' said Ferny, with emphasis. When I told him that it would be too late, he almost fainted, and gasped for air.

During the evening Ferny said that he knew the cottage well, having called at it several times. But only once had he succeeded in seeing the simple liver, and on that occasion had received some assistance. On the other occasion the door had been locked, the man being out.

That Ferny was thoroughly upset there can be no doubt, for more than once during the evening he wondered where were the man's clothes, or, to use his own words, 'Where's the man's clobber?' Not

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that he was accusing me of murdering the man and stealing his clothes, but that he – Ferny – was anxious to know whether the man had taken them with him or left them behind in the cottage. In fact, the last thing Ferny said to me that night was, ‘What has become of the man’s clobber – not to mention glasses, bottles, and jars? Where’s his old clobber? That’s what *I* want to know.’

Soon after this I had an experience of a different kind, which was not quite so pleasant, and which cured me of house-calling for some time to come. The life of a beggar is not without danger, even in a country like England. The danger of such a life in America is, of course, much greater, owing to travelling on the railroads and camping out in the woods. However, the American tramp gets hardened to fear, and he would not continue that life very long if he could not laugh at its dangers. I often think now of the nights when I went groping in the woods for fuel and, humming or whistling a tune, would overturn hollow logs and roll them to the fire. A tramp tries to do these things before dark, but sometimes he cannot find a good place to camp, and night takes him unawares. At that time I would never think of venomous snakes that were likely to be sheltered under a log or in its hollow. I often think of this now, which fortunately never occurred to me then, or I would have been robbed of many a pleasant

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fire in the woods at night. One time, when I was gathering wood, and had overturned a large log, I suddenly heard a loud buzzing sound, and the next instant the air became so black that I could not see the blaze of my fire which was only a few feet away. And then thousands of hard things like small stones struck me so hard that I thought I would soon be beaten to the earth. However, in a short time the air cleared, and I could then see, by the light of my fire, thousands of beetles of some kind crawling over the earth. No doubt a great number had perished in the flames, which had attracted them after they had been disturbed; for while I stood at the fire they continued to fall for some time after.

On another occasion, when I was gathering wood in the dark, with no other light than my fire, I caught hold of what appeared to be a broken bough hanging straight from the tree, which I expected to fall into my hands almost at a touch. But I had no sooner touched it than I fell back three feet or more, and my heart almost stopped beating – the thing was not hard, but soft. After I had thoroughly recovered from this shock, I made a torch of a roll of paper and cautiously approached it. It was then that I saw it was a dead snake and I could see the marks across its back that had killed it. No doubt it had been killed that day, and then tossed over the limb of that tree. But whether the man's object had

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been to frighten others, or was only pride to show what he had done, the same as another would cut his name in the bark – whatever his object had been, I cannot say. The next morning I measured the snake by my own body, and judged it to be about seven feet long.

However, what I want to say is this, that on my second day at Wycombe I had an experience that unnerved me as no other had ever done, and which put all question of begging houses out of my mind for some time to come. I had gone to a small village about a mile and a half out of the town, which Ferny had strongly recommended. As I was going from house to house, confident with success, I saw a fine large house standing in its own grounds, which had a long gravel path to the front door. Opening the gate I took this path, and then took a smaller one that led to the back of the house. Now, fortunately for me, when I reached the end of the house and turned the corner suddenly, I stood still, so as to take a glance at my surroundings. In an instant my eyes settled on two large bulldogs gnawing some bones and with their backs turned. When I saw those two dogs I stood like a man frozen, without power to either turn back or advance. I had often read in books about a man's hair standing on end through fear, but I did not think it possible until now. On this occasion I came by the truth, and

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knew that it was no exaggeration. I felt my cap rise, as my hair began to stand. In fact, I put up my hand to prevent the cap from falling, thinking that its motion would attract the notice of those two dogs. Of course it must be remembered that I knew what bulldogs were like: that they could not be kept at bay by kicks or threatening to throw stones; that, if they once attacked me, they could not be called off by a mistress or master. Those dogs would have torn me to pieces, I felt sure of that, for I had not even a stick to defend myself with. It must have taken me a full minute to recover myself sufficiently to turn around and creep away without making the least noise. When I began to move again, I hardly knew whether I was on my feet or on my head. After I had got clear away from that house, my narrow escape gave me such a dumb stupor that I had to lean against a fence for about ten minutes. Those dogs would most certainly have attacked me, seeing that I was sneaking around the back way.

What interested me more than anything else in Ferny was his use of slang. To hear this man talk was almost like hearing a foreign language. This is how he spoke to another beggar, whom he knew well: 'I called at the big red kennel and got my sixteen farthings for my feather and some scrand.' To which the other said: 'That kennel never yet failed a needy.' This conversation quite interested me:

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sixteen farthings for a feather was fourpence for a bed; kennel was house; scrاند was food, and needy was beggar.

Beggars in London lodging-houses use the slang of lodging-houses, and not of the open road. They always say 'fourpence for doss' or kip; but the true wandering beggars say 'sixteen farthings for a feather.' The former say 'chuck' or 'tommy,' when they refer to food; but the latter say 'scrاند.' The wandering beggar says 'skimish' for drink, but the city beggar says 'bouse.' The word 'mouch' is not often heard outside towns, for wandering beggars say 'call.' For instance, 'It is a good road to call,' or 'There is plenty of calling'; meaning that the road has many houses. They often use the word 'lay.' When one beggar asks another if a certain town is good, the former is asked, 'What is your lay?' or, 'It depends on your lay.' This means, 'What do you do – sell, sing, or go in for downright begging?' What always surprised me was to hear old beggars use the dignified word 'travellers,' in preference to beggars, needies, or callers. When they are talking of a good town, they say, 'It is good for travellers.' And if they see a selfish lodger monopolizing the fire, or not making room on the table for others, they say, 'He's not a true traveller.' Here are a few slang words used by beggars: Beggars – travellers or needies; house – kennel; on the road – on the toe

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be; talk – patter; sing – griddle or chant; sixteen farthings for a feather – fourpence for a bed; skimish – drink; clothes – clobber; soup – shackles; profit – bunts; food – scrand; pins – pricks; needles – sharps; laces – stretchers; scissors – snips; combs – rakes; spectacles – glims; pictures – smuts; take a train – take a rattler.



ON the third day after my experience in the last chapter, money came to me from home. It was only a few pounds, not enough for any practical purpose, but still it made me independent. So I decided to return to London and live on my small income, visiting the various common lodging-houses in that city. The sight of those large bulldogs had unnerved me, and I was determined to do no more house-calling. However, I made up my mind to walk to London, and not take a train, for I had no special object in reaching it.

That morning, after I had changed my postal orders, I returned to the lodging-house, to cook my breakfast, and to make up a lunch that would last me the rest of the day. As I was doing so I got into conversation with another beggar, who had arrived there the night before. He was a clean-looking man, looking very much like a labourer going to work on a Monday morning. In the course of conversation he told me that he was sick of travelling the green country, and that he could do much better by living in London and working the suburbs and outskirts, paying his train fare to and fro. He said that he wanted more houses, and that the country had too many trees to please his mind. He admitted that the

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small country towns were all right for begging, but complained bitterly of the great number of fields he had to pass to reach from one to another. He said that the country was too quiet, and he wanted to be where he could see and hear plenty of work going on. He said that he had now given the people of Deptford and Wandsworth a good spell of freedom, and that they would have no just cause to complain of his coming back to them for a month or two.

While he was telling me these things I was all ready to leave, so I said, 'I am going your way, are you ready?' 'Yes,' he answered, rising to his feet. So we left the lodging-house together. 'What part of London are you making for?' I asked as we went along. 'Deptford,' he answered. 'Do you know of a good common lodging-house in that part of London?' I asked. 'The one I am going to,' he answered, 'used to be all right, but there are some crookèd people there now, and it is not nearly so good as it used to be.' 'Then why are you going to it?' I questioned, surprised at his words, for I knew that there were plenty of other common lodging-houses in that locality. He did not answer this question, which, on a little reflection, did not surprise me. For I now saw that he looked on that particular lodging-house as a home.

I have seen the case of a common lodging-house

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going to wrack and ruin, the owner getting too mean or indifferent to keep good fires, replace broken crockeryware, and letting the beds go filthy – and still the old lodgers clung to the house instead of going to a better one that was as cheap and only a few steps away. They still clung to that house, grumbling and swearing every minute of the day; and if they were asked why they did not go elsewhere, the question would have surprised them, even as mine had surprised my companion. The house had become a home to them, and they considered it their duty to live there still: much the same as sons and daughters cling to a place that has been made wretched by drunken parents. Even people who live in respectable private houses do the same thing. It is strange how much they will suffer, after they have been in a place for a year or two. They become such slaves to their surroundings that the house next door would have to be turned into a menagerie of roaring lions, laughing hyenas, screaming parrots and chattering monkeys, before they would look for another house. When I considered these things, I was not surprised to hear that my companion was returning to a house that was worse than others of its kind and no cheaper for a poor man.

As we were walking through a small village, my companion went to several houses, but said, each

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time he rejoined me, that he was in bad luck. At last he saw a small house standing by itself, which he said looked a likely one for a sandwich or a penny. So he left my side and I walked on with slow steps, so that he could overtake me soon. However, he was at that house so long that I turned my head to see if he was coming, thinking that perhaps he had been invited indoors. When I looked I saw him making all haste towards me, without turning his head either to the right or to the left, and walking in such a business way as surprised me. He had no sooner reached my side than he said in a quick, low voice, 'Come on, or there is going to be some trouble.' He walked too fast to be questioned, for I could not keep up with him. In fact, I got very much annoyed at his haste, and let him go ahead, without making much effort to keep his company. He continued in this way until he was out of the village, and stopped and waited for me. 'Why do you hurry like this?' I asked, when I had reached him. 'I have had good cause,' he answered, 'for I was nearly arrested by a policeman.' And then he went on to explain what had happened. When I heard what he said, I could not help laughing, for he had saved himself by his wit and nothing else. The door had been answered by a policeman in full uniform, and, of course, the latter knew that my companion was a beggar who had fallen into a trap. However, my companion

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looked at the policeman, and said, 'I have had nothing to eat since yesterday, and I have come to tell you that I don't want anything.' When the policeman heard this strange sentence he was more confounded than my companion had been on seeing him. But at last he could see the artfulness of these words, and began to laugh heartily. The end of it was that he gave my companion a large piece of bread and some cheese and also a penny. But he told him to clear out of the village at once, or it would be the worse for him.

Hearing this and having formed a good opinion of my companion, I told him not to call at any more houses, that I had received a few shillings from home and would see that he wanted for nothing until we reached Deptford. 'After that,' I said, 'you will have to shift for yourself.' He seemed to be very pleased to hear this, saying that he could always do well in London, and would not forget to see that I wanted for nothing. With this understanding we continued our way; and as we went my companion told me something of his own life. He had worked very hard for a number of years, but could save nothing because his wages were so small. At last he got out of work through slackness of trade, and soon had to depend on his friends; for a whole winter almost he was idle and depending on others. But when spring came he had the courage to leave them and

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seek work in other towns. However, try as much as he could, there was no work to be had. At last he began to see it was foolish to worry about work, seeing that he was able to live without it. He had been doing without it now for a long time. It was the same tale as thousands of other beggars could tell.

It was a warm morning, but a little wind was blowing, which made it impossible to enjoy smoking our pipes in comfort. So, when we came to a green bank lined with thick hedges, I proposed sitting for a while in the sun and out of the wind, so as to enjoy a pipe of tobacco. This was our only object in sitting down, for we felt no signs of being tired, seeing that we had not yet travelled more than three miles.

While we sat there smoking and talking, we were approached by a man who, in spite of his rough looks, we judged to be an inhabitant of that district who was then out of work. This man wished us good morning, and was about to pass on; but he altered his mind and stood before us with his hands in his pockets. 'How do you fellows manage on the road?' he asked bluntly; 'do you get enough to eat and a bed every night?' I did not know how to answer this question, for it would not be wise for beggars to let a man of that kind know the truth. However, my companion at once took the responsibility on himself and answered with something of

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a groan, 'It is a hard life, mate, indeed it is.' Probably my companion thought the man was not too far down in the world to give a little help to others. 'The reason I ask,' continued the stranger, after a long pause, 'is that I am going on the road myself next week. I have been a hard-working man all my life, and worked like a slave; but I got out of work a month ago, and it is only by the kindness of others that I now get a little to eat and a place to sleep. I am only an unskilled labourer, and when I am in work I can only earn enough to keep myself from week to week. The consequence is that when I get out of work I have nothing saved. So, if a beggar can get enough to eat and a bed at night, without being a slave, why should I be a working-man any longer?' When my companion heard this his manner changed immediately, and he said in a straightforward way, 'Take to the road, mate, and be a working slave no longer. I was in exactly the same position as you a few years ago, but I became wise; for I am just as well off now as when I was a hard-working man.'

At this moment a tall, fine-looking gentleman passed, smoking a cigarette, with a cap tilted jauntily on his head and carrying a light cane under his arm. When this gentleman was beyond hearing the stranger said, looking after him, 'That's Mr. Swan.' 'What does he do?' I asked. 'Nothing,'

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answered the stranger; 'he's a gentleman. He has just pensioned his old gardener off with five shillings a week. The gardener was old and unable to do any more work.' 'How old was he?' I asked. 'About sixty-five,' answered the stranger. 'And how old is Mr. Swan?' inquired my companion. 'Oh, he is quite seventy,' was the answer. When I heard this I looked at my companion, and he understood my meaning. That fine, straight, active old gentleman, with his springy walk, carrying a light cane instead of a strong walking-stick, smoking a cigarette, and with his cap set jauntily on one side — this fine-looking old gentleman was years older than his worn-out servant. 'Hard work,' began my companion, as though in answer to my thoughts. 'Hard work *does* kill men, there is no doubt of that. The bus horse is a good instance of what hard work can do: in 1903 he is young, hardy, strong, and shies; in 1904 he is old, worn, shaky, and with no spirit; in 1905 he is cat's meat. Why, if donkeys were not stubborn, and did not refuse to hurry with heavy loads, they would not live very long.'

While we were sitting there — for the stranger had now sat down near us — talking of the ill-results of hard work, we saw an old man tottering towards us, holding in his hand a bunch of herbs. However, it would be a long time before he reached us, so I asked the stranger who he was. 'That's old Smith,'

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was the answer; 'he is not quite right in his mind. But although he is bent double and hobbles along with a stick, for all that, he is not so old as Mr. Swan, the fine-looking gentleman who has just passed by. We can't understand, in these parts, what makes old Smith what he is, for he seems to be ruined in both body and mind. He has always been a farm labourer, and never been able to afford any other than the plainest food, so that rich living has not done it. He has never been in London or any other large city, and has always breathed the pure country air. He has never had an accident or serious illness or great trouble – that his neighbours know of – and yet he is in that wretched state. To tell you the truth, some of the people around here seem to think that he is not nearly so bad as he makes out, for he is not yet seventy years old. Mr. Swan, that fine-looking gentleman who has just passed us, is that age, and look at the difference between them.' 'What makes the difference,' said my companion, looking at the stranger and speaking with strong emphasis; 'what makes the difference is hard work, and nothing else.'

The old herb-gatherer had now drawn near, and I could see that he shook in every part of his body. As soon as he got close to us he stood and began to laugh and chatter, and, feeling kindly towards old age, I nodded to him encouragingly. He began at

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once by saying that he had no sooner seen those wild herbs than it had suddenly occurred to his mind that his parents were very poor and used to gather them to make tea. And that he had no sooner began to gather them than scores of long-forgotten things came to his memory, which was very strange. It brought to his mind how his mother had been a hard-working woman and his father a very contrary man.

We sat listening to the old man for a long time, for we did not like to interrupt him, though he talked and talked without showing the least sign of going away. But after listening to him for fully ten minutes, we could not make the least sense out of what he had said — except that his mother had been a hard-working woman and his father a very contrary man, which he mentioned time after time. In vain I questioned him as to his age, who he was living with and where, and what kind of tea the herbs made. I don't know whether he was deaf or too eager to talk; all I know is that he took not the least notice of my questions, but still rambled on in his own strange manner. Only one thing he made clear — that his mother had been a hard-working woman and his father a very contrary man; and that this knowledge suddenly came into his mind when he saw and began to gather his herbs.

It was clear right from the beginning that the

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old man was not himself. For instance, he treated the three of us in the same familiar way, without making any distinction. If he had been all right in his mind, he would, of course, have recognized the man who was with us, seeing that they both belonged to the same neighbourhood. But he did not appear to notice him at all.

However, we could not remain there much longer, as we had already wasted more time than we meant to. So we wished the stranger and the old man good-bye and continued on our journey.

We reached Deptford in due course, having broken our journey overnight at Uxbridge. There was nothing of much interest to relate in those two days' travel, for we were not calling at houses, but simply walking and talking of our experiences. My companion's life had not furnished him with much strange matter, so that he preferred to listen to my own doings in America, which appeared to give him a deep interest. It brought to his mind that he once had a chance to go there, and that he had never so much regretted not having gone there as now, when he heard my account of how beggars fared in that new country.

As we were entering London my companion seemed to get as excited as a horse near fire. The sound of the traffic and the vast crowds of people seemed to rouse him into a state of activity. When

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we were on the country road his eyes were always on the ground, but now they were here, there, and everywhere. As for myself, I felt the same fascination as I had always done on entering that great city, but which soon wears away. I knew that my feelings would soon change, and that I would soon be anxious to leave again.

When we reached Deptford my companion turned off the main street, going into a narrow one. In a few moments he stopped in front of a dark building, saying, 'This is the lodging-house.' Now, seeing that my companion must be known in this house I had given him the money to pay for both our beds. I had also given him money to buy food, with the understanding that he would do the cooking, so that I could sit still in the kitchen, and none of the other lodgers would then know for certain whether I was a stranger to that lodging-house or not. If I had not done this it would have been necessary to ask questions, and, if there had been any thieves present, they would have soon taken advantage of a stranger. Of course, all common lodging-houses have a certain number of thieves.

A greenhorn is soon recognized by the number of questions he asks. For this reason men who are used to common lodging-houses seldom ask many questions when they go to a house that is strange to them. They simply take a seat, light their pipes,

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and then watch the other lodgers. In less than ten minutes they can then see for themselves where hot or cold water is to be found, where to empty a pot of tea-leaves, where to wash, where the different cooking utensils are kept, which door leads to their beds, and other knowledge that is necessary to them. But the greenhorn uses his tongue instead of his eyes, and the consequence is that he makes himself a mark for both beggars and thieves.

It is the greenhorn who is always marked for the egg-and-bacon trick – but this barefaced trick is only done in a house that is really a den of thieves. The innocent greenhorn places his tea, sugar, and bread on a table, where he leaves them to go and place a rasher of bacon on the fire. Leaving this rasher in the frying-pan for a moment or two, while he goes to arrange his tea things, he returns to find a fellow-lodger busy at the fire frying an egg and a rasher of bacon. ‘Where’s my bacon?’ asks the greenhorn of a number of lodgers who have been all the time standing and gossiping near the fire. These men either take no notice of him or look a great deal surprised. ‘I haven’t seen it, lad,’ answers the man who is cooking, at the same time as he peppers his egg or turns it over. The greenhorn does not know what to make of this, and the poor fellow will probably find his tea and sugar also gone when he gets back to his table. I once saw this trick

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served on a fellow-cattleman, but it would have been folly on my part to have exposed it, as there were twenty men against us. He was more amused than angered when I afterwards explained to him how it was done: how one of the lodgers had quickly broken an egg into the frying-pan that contained his bacon. But it had never once occurred to his simple, unsuspecting mind that the owner of the egg was not the owner of the bacon.

I could soon see that this particular house, to which my companion had taken me, was full of thieves. In fact, my companion made me aware of it at once by his instructions to sit near the food and keep my eye on it while he was gathering together plates, cups and saucers. He not only gave me these instructions, but every time he had a chance cast his own eyes in my direction. And when I began to study my surroundings and saw the number of young loafers that were present, and how their eyes were continually shifting from each other to me and my companion — when I saw this, I came to the conclusion at once that we only had to leave the kitchen for half a minute and when we came back our meal would be gone. However, they did not have the chance, and we were soon both seated and enjoying an excellent meal.

‘I don’t like the look of some of these fellows,’ I said to my companion, speaking in a low voice.

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'They soon pick up what does not belong to them,' he answered. 'Have they ever taken anything of yours?' I asked. 'No,' he laughed, 'they have never had the chance — although I was in great difficulty one day.' 'What happened then?' I asked with interest. 'Well,' began my companion, 'I had already cooked my meal and was just about to begin eating, when I discovered that I had no sugar, and to drink tea without it would have spoilt my meal. Now, seeing that the shop was across the road, I would have to leave the house, and I knew that something would be gone when I returned. There were several lodgers present, whom I knew well to be lodging-house thieves and loafers, so I did not know what to do. At last I thought of a plan. I went up to one of them, whom I knew to be the worst thief in the house, and told him in a quiet voice the difficulty I was in, and asked him to keep his eye on my things while I was away. I could see at once that he did not like my request, but of course he could not very well excuse himself. So he gave me a reluctant promise that he would, and I went out feeling quite satisfied. This artful dodge saved me, for when I came back I found things exactly as I had left them. For his kindness I gave him a drink of tea and a pipeful of tobacco. After that I was always safe, as far as he was concerned.'

When I thought of this trick I could not help

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admiring its artfulness. It was as though he told the worst thief that he was chosen for an honest, trustworthy face, and the wretch would feel flattered at the choice. How innocent he must have looked when my companion made that simple request!

After we had finished tea we sat in the kitchen for two or three hours, smoking and chatting. When the clock struck ten I told my companion that I would go to bed, and he said that he would do the same. Being a stranger it was necessary for me to go to the office, give the number of my bed and be instructed where to find it. This I did, and the porter in charge was coming to show me my bed, when my companion said, 'He is in the same room as I am, and I will show him his bed.'

At last we reached the room, after climbing a long flight of stairs. The room was a very large one, having about twenty beds in it, and mine was at the door, while my companion's was at the far end. I wished him good night and was soon lying down, not feeling at all easy in my new position. For I did not like my bed to be so near the door, seeing that every lodger could have a look at me before going to his own bed. The lodgers would then see that I was a stranger, and of course, if there were any thieves in that room, a stranger would be their mark. I had not only put my waistcoat — which contained my money — under my pillow, but had also drawn the

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latter down so far that the waistcoat was really under the weight of my shoulders and would be very difficult to withdraw. There was a gas jet in the room and, although the light was now turned low, it was quite sufficient to discourage thieves.

I don't know whether anyone was trying to get at my waistcoat and woke me, or that my eyes opened by accident – whatever it was, open they did, and I saw a face leaning over mine. 'What's the matter?' I cried, moving so as to sit up in bed. 'Oh, it's all right,' answered the intruder; 'I made a mistake, thinking it was some one I knew.' With these words he walked away to a bed at the other end of the room, where he began to undress. Of course I knew very well that he had made no mistake, and was determined to keep awake, thinking he would return when he thought I would be asleep.

I must have gone to sleep again, but don't know for how long. All I know is that I heard a loud voice, which made me sit up in bed. As soon as I opened my eyes I saw that the light was out and that the room was in total darkness. 'Who has turned out that light?' demanded a loud voice. It must have been this man asking the question before that had wakened me. There was no answer to his question, except that other lodgers were now awake and began complaining in the same way. All at once there was a small, sudden flash of light,

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due to one of the lodgers having struck a match. It was the worse thing he could have done, for another lodger leaped out of bed, made a rush towards the light-maker and struck him a heavy blow in the face. This blow was the signal for a general rising. For I could hear men getting out of bed, and the next moment there was a fight going on in the dark. Men were falling against each other and striking out blindly, and their blows were followed by curses and groans. Some of them were using their fists, and others, as I was told after, used the heels of their heavy boots, and two or three were using the buckles of heavy belts. In a fight of this kind every man was for himself. Whoever he touched in the dark would be an enemy to strike, for he would not know his friends.

Right at the beginning of this trouble I had had the presence of mind to put on my clothes. I was just ready to open the door and escape when several men, fighting and struggling, fell against it. In an instant I got on top of my bed, slipped over the other side of it, and stood upright against the wall, with the bed between me and them. It was very fortunate that I did this, for others had now succeeded in fighting their way to the door, which of course they could not open owing to their own pressure being against it. I could hear the manager's voice outside, as he stood there powerless, for there

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must have been a dozen men fighting against the door.

I don't know what the end of this would have been, had it not been for the presence of mind of one man. He had not risen from his bed at all until now, when he heard all the others fighting at the far end of the room, trying to escape. Knowing that he was now safe to move with freedom, he got up, struck a match and lit the gas. This light was of course the signal for peace, except that two lodgers were lying across a bed and trying to strangle each other. I found out after that that these two men were thieves and great friends, and that they had mistaken each other in the dark. One of them was the man who had leaned over my bed, and no doubt it was he who had put out the light, so as to make another attempt to search my clothes. I was very pleased to think that these two, who had probably arranged all this, should have stumbled against each other in the dark and, without knowing it, pommelled each other until they could no longer move.

This was my only experience, in all my association with rough men, where I have known men to fight like cats, to use their limbs like cats instead of men: biting, tearing, choking and scratching, and using every advantage of tooth and nail. The only case I can think of, when men would do this, is when

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they fight under these conditions. In trying to escape they would soon be jammed against the door, where they would try to tear each other to pieces. Every man would be for himself, for he would not be able to tell a friend from an enemy. If they are not soon set free, from the outside, or discovered by light, they will be struggling on the floor, making the same sounds as common beasts. All thought of fair play and scientific fighting known to man would be forgotten, and the coolest and most courageous would soon be acting in the same manner as fighting cats. This is the only case I can think of in which men would behave like cats, when they would have to fight for their lives — owing to not having a cat's advantage of seeing in the dark.

But the fight was soon over, though it was horrible while it lasted. As soon as the gas was lit the men stopped fighting, and the manager had a chance to enter the room. When he had done so, he did not seem to be greatly concerned, so I suppose such fights had happened before. As long as there was no one dead, or injured to helplessness, it did not matter much, although it was very annoying, he said, 'to have to leave his bed to see what was the matter.'

For the rest of the night all was quiet, although every man that had received a blow said, before he went to sleep again, 'I'd like to know the man who struck me first and tore my shirt to pieces.' Each

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man was fortunate that he did not, or he would have had more fighting to do that night, without a question of trouble the next day. As it was, no man would feel ashamed at getting a beating, for the blows were all struck at random and the result was not due to one man being a better fighter than another.

When I questioned my companion, on the following morning, he said that the light had been put out by a thief who wanted a chance to do a little work. 'It was very lucky that some one lit it again,' I said, 'or something serious would have happened.' 'That was my work,' he answered; 'I have been in the same position before and have done the same thing. Perhaps the thief had you for a mark, seeing that you were a stranger.' I said nothing to this, but when I thought of the man who had leaned over me, I felt satisfied that all the trouble had been due to my presence in that room.

While I was at breakfast I saw the two men that had struggled together on a bed — afraid to let each other go — standing at the kitchen fire, and with their faces scratched and bruised. Of course they were quite friendly now, for they knew what a mistake they had made in attacking each other. I could not help noticing how often they looked sideways at me, as though they were curious to know if I had any suspicion of their intention the night before. As far as I could do so with my looks,

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I let them know that I had, for it was not my intention to spend another night in that house. I could not understand why they made me their mark, for I had not shown any money, I was not drunk, neither was I well dressed. Perhaps they were in very low circumstances, so that even a paltry few pennies would have given them pleasure. However, they not only failed, but, to my delight, punished each other without knowing it.

That morning, when I was in the washhouse, a man stepped forward and deliberately picked up my piece of soap. He was walking away with it, when I called out to him, 'Ha! where are you going with that soap?' 'Does it belong to you?' he asked, quite innocently. 'You see me standing here, preparing to wash,' I said, surprised at his boldness; 'now, who do you think it belongs to?' Hearing this he looked considerably surprised himself, and at last said, 'Why, mate, any man would take a piece of soap.' This man was nothing abashed at being caught in the act of thieving.

Soon after breakfast my companion left me, saying that he was going to some streets where he had often done well before, and that he would see me later in the day. He was a good beggar, I knew that, and could very well do without my assistance, so that I did not feel any compunction at seeing the last of him, for I was now determined to seek

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fresh lodgings. No doubt he would not feel very sorry at not seeing me again, thinking that I might not be a very successful beggar and, when my money was all gone, would rely on him for help, which he could not very well refuse.

At this time I had no idea of making a home of a common lodging-house, so I made up my mind to find one in Southwark, at which I would spend a few nights. So, after my companion had left, it was not long before I was out and going in that direction. There was no hurry, seeing that I had the whole day before me; but I thought it would be wise to see the house by day, and the looks of the lodgers as they went in and out, before I applied for a bed. The looks of the lodgers would decide for me, whether the majority were old or young. If there were many young men, I would not apply for a bed, knowing that they would be bullies and thieves. But if the majority of the lodgers were old men, I knew that such would not only be harmless, but also interesting to study.

It was not long before I stood in front of a house which, judging by the few men I saw going in and out, would suit me well. Not only that, but I saw on a board that a mission-room was attached to it, and I knew that no riotous lodgers would be allowed to disturb hymn-singing and prayers. Whatever the lodgers' opinions might be, they would have to

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express themselves quietly or go elsewhere. In fact, every lodger that I had seen had a lazy, contented look, and I did not see one with those shifting eyes that denote a thief. I was so impressed with all this, that I went to the office at once, paid for a bed, and then walked into the lodgers' kitchen. And I had no sooner entered that kitchen than I felt at ease immediately, for when I sat down the various lodgers took no notice of me at all. 'These men are not thieves looking for a mark,' thought I.

At this common lodging-house I became acquainted with a very strange man, one who could almost make a living by simply walking about from place to place. This man had a small income, and he must have guessed that I was in the same position, as he became very friendly. He thought that I could be safely approached in a familiar way without any risk that I would try to borrow from him. I suppose he had watched me, and saw that I had no special time for going out or coming in; and also that I took nothing out with me in the morning, nor returned with anything in the evening; as is the case with men that sell papers or toys. He also saw that my food was bought, not begged, and that I came back in as clean as I went out. So he came to the conclusion that I was independent in a small way, the same as himself.

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I had spoken to this man on several occasions, but had not had a long conversation until one morning he came to me with a letter in his hands, which he had found, and which he asked me to read. Rather surprised at this confidence, I took the letter and read it. But it was of no consequence whatever, being an ordinary friendly greeting from one woman to another, and whoever lost it would not have much cause to worry. I told my new acquaintance this, and was surprised at his answer. 'Whether it is of any value or not,' he said, beginning to chuckle, 'I intend to make something out of it. You may as well come that way for a walk, and we will return it to the owner.' As a rule I took my walks alone, so as to be free to sit on seats and write or go into the libraries to read. However, on this occasion I decided to go walking with my new friend.

As we were going through St. James's Park, my new friend made a sudden dart forward and picked up a silver pin. I had already noticed that his eyes were always searching the ground, and I was now surprised that he should want my company at all, for he spoke very little and seemed quite indifferent to my voice.

At last we reached the West End, near Hyde Park, and, having found the letter's address — one of a row of large houses — he went boldly to the

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front door and rang the bell. After inquiring for the lady of the house and seeing her, he returned the letter, which she said was of little account. But she thanked him for his trouble, and was about to close the door. My new friend then quickly explained to her that he had thought the letter might have been of great consequence, and that he had walked three miles to return it to its proper owner. Now, what else could the lady do, under these circumstances, than to thank him with more feeling and make the poor man a present of money?

These things my companion explained to me after he had delivered the letter. He also said that he had made quite a number of shillings in that way — by returning lost letters, and some that had actually been thrown away. In fact, he confessed with a laugh that on several occasions he had taken empty envelopes to houses and received money for doing so. 'This is only an envelope,' a lady would say, smiling; 'I have the letter safely at home.' 'I didn't know but what a note or letter was inside,' my artful friend would answer innocently, 'and have walked until I am tired, so as to return it.' Whatever a lady might think of this, she could not very well refuse to reward him for his trouble.

When we were on our way back, after delivering this lost letter, it was not long before he startled me by making another sudden jump, and this time

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he picked up a silver sixpence. 'What a lucky man you are!' I exclaimed; 'I don't believe there is one man in this large city who has better eyesight than mine, and yet I never find anything.' He was in such a good humour now that he became talkative, and that, I suppose, was the reason why he found nothing else.

When I became more intimate with this man, he called me one day to his locker, which he was in the act of cleaning. There were only three men in the kitchen at the time, and they were sitting at the far end. If there had been the least likelihood of one of these men coming near enough to see the contents of his locker, it is most certain that he would not have called me. It was then that he began to show me the various things that he had found during his five years in London. And when I saw the things he had, I was astonished, for I believe this man could have made a small living by merely walking about. He had several fountain-pens, one gold-mounted, which must have cost thirty or forty shillings. He showed me a gold pencil case and two silver ones; also a silver matchbox, finely embossed, which still contained the wax matches as it had been found. I saw several purses, all of which had contained money; and there was a lady's parasol, which had been left on a seat in one of the parks. There was also a gentleman's costly cane, found in the same

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way. He had dozens of fine handkerchiefs, which had been dropped and, becoming dirty, would be passed by the poorest people, but which this very careful man had picked up and washed: fine, beautiful handkerchiefs, well worth picking up and washing. These he had saved, only using the common ones himself; for he could not tell what their quality was until they were washed and cleaned. He showed me several articles of jewellery, such as rings, bracelets, and brooches; and one pendant, which was a silver cross with a Christ crucified in gold, which he had found one Sunday morning in Hyde Park. Even books – popular novels that had been left on the seats: some of which had not been forgotten, but read and thrown away – were to be seen in this man's locker.

When I saw all these dozens and dozens of various articles, I was surprised. 'You must find something every time you go out,' I said, 'to have collected so many things as these.' 'Oh, no,' he answered at once; 'I often go a whole day without finding anything of the least value. But there are exceptional days when I am sure to find several things. For instance, after a holiday I go the next morning to some heath or common where a great number of people has been, and I am then almost certain to find something of value, not to mention a number of things of little account, but still worth

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the trouble of picking up and carrying home. Of course, I am always on the spot at soon as it is daylight, for there are others that do the same thing.'

This man had stuff that must have cost the owners a hundred pounds and more – things of gold and silver; things of silk, a fur muffler, a silk handkerchief; brier pipes, gloves, knives, pocket-books and reading books; purses which, it must be remembered, had contained money; and scores of other things of more or less value. For nothing was too small or mean for him – he even picked up the ferrules of umbrellas and walking-sticks.

I was surprised to hear that a great number of these things had been found in the parks, either having been dropped while walking or left by accident on the seats. I was surprised at this, because the parks were always full of vagrants. But after a while I considered the great advantage this man would have over those poor fellows, being fresh and active; whereas the poor vagrants would be either lying asleep in the grass or awake, but too tired to walk, seeing that they had been walking about sleepless all through the night.

What a strange man he was, for he never offered any of these things for sale, but kept them in his locker, and occasionally took pleasure in looking them over, taking great care that no other lodger was near enough to see him. His small income was

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enough to keep him, and being indifferent to personal appearance, he therefore had no need of extra money. In fact, he purposely kept himself looking like the commonest beggar, so the people would take less notice when they saw him stooping to pick things up.

I only accompanied him twice on his rambles, for I felt ashamed to see him continually stooping, and people looking at him all the time. In Regent Street he stopped so suddenly to pick up a half-penny that a very fine lady who was walking close behind fell across his back. This incident was quite enough for me, and I swore to myself that I would never go out with him again, and I kept my word.

I have often wondered at such a man as this, as to what kind of mind he had. He would have no thoughts of either the future or the past, for his mind must be concentrated on the present moment. If he indulged in the least inclination to dream, he could not be a successful finder. He would see no beauty in the trees — they would only be obstacles to his eyes, like houses. He would hear no birds, and never turn his head to see what made children laugh. His eyes would not waste one second on a child's golden hair, for fear they would miss a brass pin on the ground.

15: QUEER CHARACTERS



THE man I have mentioned in the last chapter was not the only queer fellow in this place, for the house was full of them. Some of them sold papers or toys in the street, others did odd jobs at the fish or vegetable market, and two or three of them were on the downright. Of the latter one was called Bony. We called him Bony because he was all skin and bones. This condition must have been constitutional, for it certainly was not from too much activity, seeing that he went by tram on his expeditions, and returned in the same manner. Again, it could not have been for want of food, for Bony was an excellent beggar, and scorned to sit down to a bread-and-butter meal. He was also a good ale-drinker, and, if his bones had been capable of growing flesh, it is very likely that ale would have helped to bring about that result. He was always heard to be humming a tune – often an old familiar hymn – so that it could not have been mental worry that fastened his skin so tight to his bones.

One evening, after Bony had had tea and was emptying his pockets of tram-fare tickets, I invited him outside to have a drink. This invitation he would accept only on one condition – that I would then have another with him. Having no objection

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to this, we left the house together, and were soon comfortably seated in the warm corner of an ale-house.

After we had had the second drink, I began by asking Bony what he considered to be the most essential gift for a good beggar. Without immediately answering this question, he called for two more drinks, and, after they had been served and he had praised the colour of the ale, he began. 'The one thing, above all others, is to have ready wit, so as to take advantage of opportunities that come and go in a second, and give no time for second thoughts. For instance,' continued Bony, 'when I was in the country some time ago, I called at a house for a glass of water. I did not think that there was the least prospect of getting tea, as the time was between meals; therefore, being dry, I asked for water. A little girl answered the door, and after hearing my wants, returned to tell her mother. "Certainly," said the mother; "he could have had a cup of tea, if he had asked for it, but perhaps he prefers water." These words were said so low that they could not have been heard, except by a man who had all his wits about him. So, when the little girl returned with the water, I told her, in a voice loud enough to be heard in the house, that I was really sick for a hot drink of tea, but that it was not the tea-hour, and I must be content with water.

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I lifted the glass of water slowly to my lips, so slowly that the lady had heard my remark, weighed it for a second and then promised a cup of tea, before my lips had touched the water. And, of course, the kind lady asked me if I would like a piece of cake to eat with the tea. You see,' continued Bony, 'how a man needs to keep his wits at work. Nine beggars out of ten would not have heard or, having heard, would have accepted the water and cursed themselves inwardly that they had not asked for tea.' I was so interested in this recital that I called for two more drinks.

'Again,' said Bony, after praising the colour of the ale, 'I happened one day to see a lady and gentleman approaching, and determined to accost them. As they drew near, I saw a crust of bread on the road, and that was my chance. Casting a hasty look behind me, as though I did not wish to be seen, I stooped, picked up the crust, and pretended to take a bite; and then I feigned to see them for the first time, and hastily concealed the crust in my clothes. That little trick worked out well, for the lady gave me sixpence, and the gentleman gave me a shilling, and not one word passed between us.

Bony now called for two more drinks, and, after remarking that the colour of the ale was getting no worse, continued his experiences.

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‘One day,’ he began, ‘I was walking the high road when a gentleman on a bicycle ran into me, knocking me down and throwing himself into the hedge. It did me no harm at all, for I was soon on my feet and going to his assistance. All my consideration was for him, thinking that he might be seriously hurt. To my surprise he was not, though much shaken. After he had sufficiently recovered his breath he looked towards me and said, “Are you hurt, my poor man?” Quick as a flash it occurred to me that I was, and I began to limp painfully. “How far are you going?” he asked. I mentioned a town four miles away, and said that I had no doubt but what I could walk there, but that on my reaching that place it would probably be a week or more before I would be able to work, even if I could get it, and that I had no means whatever to keep myself idle in lodgings for that length of time. “Are you sure that you can walk there without assistance?” he asked. “Yes,” I said, “by taking my time.” “I am very sorry for you,” said he, “and if this can be of help you are heartily welcome to it” — with that he placed in my hand a gold half-sovereign. Telling him I was ashamed to take advantage of what was no more than a pure accident, but that my straitened circumstances compelled me to do so, and saying how glad I was that he received no hurt I left him, and began to limp painfully on

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my way. I had not got many yards, when he was again at my side, and, giving me his card, asked me to write in the course of a day or two, and let him know of my progress. And, you may depend on it,' said Bony, with a grin, 'that I did write on the third day, saying that I was doing well – for I feared a personal visit from him, with a doctor – and that in three or four days I would be in a fit condition to work. He wrote a very kind letter in answer to mine, with a postal order enclosed for ten shillings. Of course, I still keep that gentleman's address, and call on him occasionally, and I always receive a good meal and a shilling, and sometimes clothes as well.'

'Have another drink, Bony,' said I.

After the drinks were brought, and Bony had passed his usual comment on the colour, he went on to tell how necessary it was to keep a civil tongue on all occasions. 'One day,' said he, 'a little bit of a man whom I could have crushed in my arms, called me all the big, idle vagabonds he could think of. But I allowed him free speech, knowing that he would be so pleased to see a man timid, who was almost twice his size, that he would at last become generous out of sheer delight, and such was the case.'

'On another occasion I called at a lady's house, and received sixpence for my trouble, which was

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the first bit of silver that I had seen for several days, and for which I thanked her from the bottom of my heart. She stood at the door, as I was leaving, and said, "Poor, unfortunate man!" "Madam," I answered, returning, for I was almost at the gate – "Madam," I said, "I am thankful to say that I am not half so unfortunate as my poor brother, who has weak intellect." "Oh, I am deeply moved to hear that," said the kind lady, "and will give you another sixpence for your poor brother."

'These incidents,' continued Bony, 'prove how necessary it is to have quick wits. Only last week within a mile of this alehouse, I got a two-shilling piece from a man in a very simple manner. I had been calling at the alehouses all the evening, and was returning home with three or four shillings' worth of coppers in my pockets, not to mention the pleasant effect on my system of several free drinks of good strong ale.

'When I was on the bridge, I had my attention drawn to the sound of voices in a small boat running under the bridge, which made me pause and, leaning on the balustrade, look down into the river. This was not done so much from curiosity, but that I was beginning to feel tired. At that hour of the night the bridge was almost deserted, and I was just on the point of moving on when a gentle hand fell on my shoulder, and a voice kind and earnest

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said: "Don't, I entreat you, destroy your immortal soul; don't, my dear brother, plunge into those dark waters." I must confess that, for one moment, my wits deserted me entirely, and if the speaker had not held me in his grasp, and continued his persuasion, I should have been foolish enough to explain that such was not my intention. But I soon recovered from my astonishment, and allowed him to lead me over the bridge, and away from the river. When we stood safely on the other side, he asked me what could be done to save me from self-destruction. Of course I had by this time recovered my wits, and told him a harrowing tale of misfortune, which earned me that gentleman's pity to the extent of five shillings. After receiving my promise that I would live and face misfortune like a man, he left me, and I, well pleased at such good fortune, made my way back to the lodging-house.'

These incidents, as related by Bony, proved to me how necessary it was for a man to be quick-witted, if he would excel as a beggar.

After several more drinks we left for the lodging-house, for the colour of the ale did not seem quite so good as when we first entered the place.

When I got back to the lodging-house, after having had this experience with Bony, I found the place full of excitement, owing to a lodger having called Gentleman Bill a damned conspirator. It

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seemed that the man had claimed a letter at the office which did not belong to him. When the clerk received letters, he wrote the surnames on a sheet of paper, which he placed in the window. The Christian names were kept secret, so that he could question applicants about them, this being the only plan of placing letters in the right hands. Where there were such a number of men there were certain to be several of the name of Smith, Jones, Brown, and other common names. So when one morning the clerk received a letter for William Henry, he added the surname to his list. Reading the list of names a simple lodger, whose Christian name was Henry, made application for the said letter. The clerk got the letter and, glancing at the envelope, made his usual inquiry, 'Your Christian name?' Now, it happened that the man did not know the meaning of this question, and to be on the safe side he gave his full name, which was Henry Brown. The clerk lost patience at Brown's simplicity and said, 'This letter is not for you; your Christian name is Henry, but the man to whom this letter belongs is surnamed Henry.' The dissatisfied and unconvinced lodger left the office and sought Gentleman Bill, whom he found and consulted. Bill went into a long discourse as to the origin of surnames, but the lodger cut him short by asking what right the clerk had to place his name on the list and not give up the letter. It

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was no use for Bill to try to explain the difference between surnames and Christian names, and he was no more successful than the clerk, although he took fifty times the time and words. The upshot of it was that the infuriated lodger called Bill a damned conspirator, whereas Bill also lost his calmness and called the lodger a fool.

How Bill was spoilt by so much consultation was made apparent to me by a little incident that escaped the notice of others. He had been having a glass or two of ale, and, coming into the kitchen with his book, which was a grammar, seated himself comfortably at the fire. The effect of the ale, the heat of the fire, and the inactive state of his body, soon made Bill bow his head to the table, and in a minute or two he was fast asleep. I happened to be sitting near him at the time, and was taken by surprise to hear his voice. Thinking he was addressing me I turned, but saw that he was fast asleep and talking to himself. All at once I heard him say, as distinctly as though he had been awake, 'What I need is a silk hat and a frock-coat': meaning, of course, that if he had those things, for the sake of appearance, his knowledge, conversation, and manners would be the making of him.

On one or two occasions I had the honour of being consulted by Bill — of which I am very proud, for he did not consider any other man in the house

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was able to teach him anything. I had always managed to satisfy him with my remarks, but when he approached me one night, with his grammar book in his hand, and asked me if I knew anything about the infinitive split, the question almost took my breath away. Certainly I had heard of it, heard enough to know that it was to be avoided as a subject of argument, or it would soon worry a man to a shadow. I told Bill at once that I could not enlighten him, and advised him not to worry over it. This advice was not taken, for he bought two more cheap second-hand grammar books, and still could not get on the track of the infinitive split. In less than three weeks his voice was low and weak, his face became haggard and thin, his hair lay uncombed on his forehead, and his bones began to show their shape under his skin. He was not even civil in those days, and no longer felt the importance of being consulted. He requested the lodgers not to bother him, saying that he had other things on his mind, and far more trouble than he could contend with.

A man may not only play many parts in life, but sometimes even his real character undergoes a change and conforms to his surroundings. Such was the case with Gentleman Bill. When he first came to our lodging-house he was a quiet, modest man, who was almost too timid to hazard a suggestion on the most common subjects; but in less than three months

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conceit and importance was so thrust upon him that he was almost too proud to walk. I was a witness of this development of a new character, right from the beginning, and saw that Bill was not in any way to blame; but that the ignorance of his associates shoved him, in spite of his modesty, shoulder-high above themselves. Bill, it appeared to me, had mixed, ere his downfall, with people who were his equal, and not a few of whom were his superior – hence his modesty when he first came to our house as a needy lodger.

He was seen to be a very quiet man, always reading newspapers or books, or walking silently up and down the kitchen in deep thought. For a month or more the lodgers took very little notice of him, but when his appearance had grown familiar to them, they began to ask his opinion on different subjects – cooking, physic, the nutritious value of foods, the meaning of words, the use of the House of Lords, and many other interesting things. These questions were answered by Bill in such a high-flown manner, as became a great reader, that really his hearers were little the wiser, and came to the conclusion that Bill's knowledge was far too deep for them. The lodgers were so awestruck at Bill's easy delivery of unusual words that they could not grasp the underlying thought. It was not long before he became so puffed with his own importance,

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and so eager to express his opinions, that he did not wait an invitation to join in a conversation, but stood in the middle of the kitchen and spoke in such a masterly way that some of the lodgers thought that he was an ex-M.P. He was not satisfied with giving his own opinions, but quoted poets, philosophers, lawyers, and statesmen; and the lodgers at last became so impressed that they sought him all over the house to hear him settle an argument. One morning Little Brum actually took a cup of tea to Gentleman Bill, while the latter was still in bed, so as to get him down to settle a dispute that was likely to make the principals lose a morning's work.

It was not long before Bill had to pay the penalty of being so important, for some of the more simple lodgers began to ask him such idiotic questions that Bill, who up to the present had never been at a loss for a word, could do no more than stand dumb with amazement. For instance, one day a poor simple fellow asked the following question: 'Is it right to post a letter to-day that was written yesterday?' Soon after this an Irishman asked him the belief of the laity, and whether it was for or against the Pope of Rome. Another lodger had heard that an egg boiled too hard could be again boiled soft, and wanted to know if it could be boiled long enough to recover its first raw state. On hearing these questions,

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poor Bill began to lose patience and grumble, saying that he could not be expected to know everything. The lodgers would not allow him peace to have a cup of tea, to shave, wash, or read.

However, it was not long before Gentleman Bill had a serious rival in this lodging-house, and it was no other than myself, although it was neither of my seeking nor my liking. For instance, a man who is seen using a pen and writing in a common lodging-house will soon have his services sought so often that he must be offended, however kind-hearted he may be. He will be pestered by illiterate seekers of work, and even begging-letter impostors. In the latter case the men are cunning enough to invent pitiful tales, but they lack the education to write them. Many a man who has only lived a short time in a lodging-house, and is innocent of the world, has written letters for these rogues, and not known what he was doing. Strange to say, very few of these men are able to write their own letters; and, seeing that they usually pose for men that have lost good positions, it is not to be wondered at when they have no courage to face a personal interview. With regard to honest seekers of work, a man will soon be sorry that he has obliged them at all, because of the awkward position in which it places him. For if they do not receive any answer to the letter you have written for them, or one that is not favour-

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able, they are very apt to blame the letter-writer. One day a man came to me, who had often seen me writing, and asked me if I would write him a few lines in answer to an advertisement. Seeing that he brought a stamped envelope and a sheet of writing-paper, and I already had pen and ink on the table before me, I did so at once, to my sorrow. The poor fellow received no answer at all – and he was under the impression that I could word a letter in such a way that he was certain to be successful. It never occurred to him that the advertisement, being in a leading paper, would be answered by hundreds of men. When several days passed, and no answer came, no doubt he had the impression that he would have been more successful himself, and that I had spoilt him of that job by my manner of writing. So he was very cold after this, leaving me with one consolation – that I had not only received no benefits from him, but wanted none, whether he was successful or not. One man, who could hardly read or write, brought me his aunt's letter to be deciphered, from whom he was getting assistance every week. I had so much difficulty in reading her letter that I told him after that his aunt's writing was very bad. Hearing this he began to throw out hints that the fault must be with me, for his aunt had married a rich brewer, and was now a widow with seven servants. Seeing what a simple man I had to deal

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with, I tried to explain that the handwriting of some of the greatest people was bad, and that it was not their handwriting made them great, but the thoughts and language they used. But I saw that he could not understand my meaning, and he brought me no more of his aunt's letters.

In fact, the letters I have written to oblige others have made me more enemies than friends. The most grateful thanks I have received for doing this kindness was not from a man living in a lodging-house, but from one on the outside. I was in the lodging-house kitchen one night when 'Brummy' Sam brought a married friend of his to see me. The former lost no time in explaining to me that his friend Alf had a daughter in service in the country. Now, this daughter had been written to several times, by her mother, sister, and brother, but none of them could get an answer; so Alf, 'Brummy' Sam explained, 'wanted to know the ins and outs of her reasons.' The latter, who had been drinking, confided to me with deep emotion that his friend Alf was a faithful old dog, and, 'as for Alf's old woman, there wasn't a better-natured bleeding old cat in all London.' Although he whispered this information, it was quite loud enough for Alf to hear, and the big fellow looked at Sam with gratitude. After saying these words Sam straightened himself and said: 'I have been telling Alf about you, as how

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you can write, and we think you can put the letter in such a way that she will answer it at once.' Hearing this I was not well pleased, for I could hardly hope to be more successful than the girl's own mother. It was most likely that there was nothing at all the matter, and that she was only waiting a convenient time to write. However, I wrote to Alf's daughter and gave it to the girl's father, which he received with so much delight and such a pressing invitation to drink that it quite upset me, thinking that my letter would be no more successful than theirs. But I am pleased to say that she not only answered it at once, but asked her mother who had written it. Perhaps she thought it was a lawyer, and was afraid that further neglect in not reporting herself at home would lead to the police court. Alf was so grateful that his friendship became a nuisance, especially when he was drunk; and I was very glad that he only came to the house as a visitor, and did not live there altogether.

But in a very common lodging-house it is not often that a man is asked to write a letter. I used to write for one man to his mother, about once a month, and he was very thankful to me, for I would never take anything from these poor fellows. It was a dreadful task for me to write a letter of that kind, for he had nothing to say except, 'Give my love and say I am all right, and remember me to Aunt Sarah.'

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And the simple man not only expected me to fill two or three pages on this meagre information, but wanted to know if I had enough paper. This man was a consumptive, and when I wrote one letter for him he was about to go into a hospital. He asked me then if I would write a few lines to his mother if anything serious happened to him. I promised to do so, but am glad to say he was back in a few weeks, although not much better.

I shall never forget writing one letter for a man who was leading a double life. He had only just come to our lodging-house, but he was so well known to all the old lodgers that I could see that he had been there before. When this man first came under my notice he was in the act of sewing a patch on the knee of his trousers, the latter still being on his body. I may as well say here that he made a very bad job of it, for he sewed his trousers to a pair of drawers that he wore underneath, which made him swear so much that night, when he undressed, that the irritated lodgers, disturbed from sleep, threatened to throw him out of the window. One day I asked a lodger what this man did for a living, thinking that he was either a toy-seller, paper-man, or market porter. The lodger began to chuckle, and said: 'If you are down Brixton way to-morrow, you are likely to see him and what he is doing.' As I asked the question for the sake of being sociable,

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and not from curiosity, I thought no more of the matter. However, some time after this I happened to be in Brixton, and saw the man I have mentioned standing in the gutter – blind. He saw me, too, for he made an awful expression, which I translated into these words – ‘Don’t stop and speak to me, pass on.’ A few days after this unexpected meeting he no sooner saw me entering the lodging-house kitchen than he came forward with an envelope and a sheet of writing-paper. ‘Will you write me a letter?’ he asked. ‘I will pay you.’ Now, I had been out all day and was hungry, and was just about to prepare my tea. So I told him sharply that if I wrote the letter I wanted nothing for doing it, and, whether I wrote it or not, he must give me a chance to have my tea first. Nearly all men that live in common lodging-houses talk to each other in this strain, for they are all more or less short-tempered, or, as they say, ‘scatty.’ So I knew that he would not take offence, and was not surprised to see him come forward, after he had given me ample time for tea. ‘I am not much of a scholar,’ he began. ‘What do you want me to write about?’ I asked. ‘Well,’ said he, ‘a gentleman saw me in the street and took my address, and has just sent me a parcel of clothes, and I want to thank him. Here is his letter, with address, which was in the parcel.’ ‘All right,’ I answered, and did so at once. After I had done I

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read aloud what I had written, and asked if it would do. He considered for a moment, and then said: 'Perhaps you will write a little more and say that Heaven will reward him for pitying a poor blind man.' I could not help laughing when I heard this, for he spoke so exactly that I believe the rogue had forgotten that he was not really blind.

It is very pathetic on a Christmas morning to see seventy or eighty men in a common lodging-house kitchen, and not six of them receive any greetings from the outside world. In one house, where the manager's charming little daughter received scores of letters and presents from school friends and friends of her parents, there were not ten out of ninety lodgers who received a single letter — on a Christmas morning! It was when I saw this that it came on me in full force to know what an isolated plague spot a common lodging-house is. Men who have spent years in such places must feel deeply the loneliness of their lives at that season, when every person outside a lodging-house finds time to either visit friends and relatives or write to them.



EVEN in this strange lodging-house, which was well conducted and clean, there was always a certain amount of mild excitement going on, owing to the quaintness and simplicity of its many strange characters, nearly all of them being known by a nickname. I was present in the kitchen on the day that one man arrived as a stranger, nameless and alone, as far as the other lodgers were concerned, for they did not know what name he had entered at the office. He was in rags and tatters, and 'Rags' or 'Tatters' should certainly have been his name. In fact the name was offered to him, but he returned an unsatisfactory stare. He was preparing his tea at the same table as 'Punch,' and the latter being in need of a pinch of salt, and seeing none of his friends at tea, asked this stranger to oblige him, saying: 'Would you oblige me, "Rags," with a pinch of salt?' The man stared at 'Punch' for a moment, and then walked away without giving an answer. He was at that time cooking a herring at the fire. Now, it so happened that a few moments later this man was pouring out tea, when all at once there was a loud cry of 'Whose herring is this?' The man turned quickly at the sound, and saw his herring making a few spasmodic motions, as it dangled on a

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long wire. He immediately ran to the rescue, but, alas! too late; for the tatters of his loose and broken clothes encompassed him like a deadly plant, and when he arrived the herring was lying motionless under the grate. After great care he managed to bring it to the light, covered with ashes and cinders. Still, with great care, he washed it and, after placing it flat on a plate, returned it to the fire. 'I hope you do not blame me for that accident, "Cinders,"' said kind-hearted little Punch. 'Oh, no,' answered the man newly named 'Cinders.' "'Cinders" has too much sense for that,' said Red-Nosed Scotty, who happened to be sitting near. 'Whose teapot is this?' cried the kitchen-man, who was about to build the coke fire and wanted all food and teapots removed. 'It belongs to "Cinders,"' cried a number of voices. From that day to this his name is 'Cinders,' owing to the accident to his herring when he first came, alone and unknown. If he was arrested, it would be - 'Cinders is in jail'; and if he died it would be - 'Cinders is dead.'

If a man who goes to live in a common lodging-house does not utter his own name in a very short time the lodgers will give him one. Brown had a large nose, and would most certainly have been named 'Nosey' had he not on the first day recorded a simple anecdote of his childhood, in which he had cause to call himself William Brown.

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I remember the day well when the 'Dodger' – a man who gladly helped others to spend their earnings on ale and, when they sat penniless and hungry, sat himself down alone to beefsteak and onions – I remember the day well when this man caused a never-to-be-forgotten sensation in the lodging-house kitchen. A letter was at the office for Algernon Dudley, and the manager had been in the kitchen several times in quest of that gentleman. It was near seven o'clock in the evening when he came into the kitchen for the fifth time and cried, 'Is Algernon Dudley here?' 'Yes,' answered a man in the corner, and coming quickly forward. All eyes turned towards him, and who do you think Algernon Dudley was? No other than the common 'Dodger.' 'Fatty,' who claimed to be a fighting man, whom no man had ever succeeded in knocking down, said to the lodger named Brown, 'You could have knocked me down with a feather.'

Brown's remarks on this occasion were very sensible, as they usually were. 'It was, is, and always will be the custom,' said he, 'for a woman who gives birth to a child to name it. For this reason she is no sooner on the trot again than she begins scheming to that end. Now,' continued Brown, 'we must not picture the "Dodger" as he is – God help him! – but as he was, a little innocent child in the arms of a doting woman. Such was the case, and has been

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the same with others, including ourselves, and will always be. Now, this poor woman – some people would call her foolish – no doubt had great respect for the “Dodger” as a baby and, to distinguish him from the common race of mankind, named him in the manner we have just heard. Perhaps I am right, perhaps I am wrong; but if the true facts were known, you would probably find that I am not far from the truth. But in spite of all this, I quite agree with our friend’s remark, that it fills us with astonishment.’ The ‘Dodger’ had lived in the house for more than two years when this incident caused so many comments.

But let us return to the man ‘Cinders,’ for that gentleman was no helpless wreck in a doss-house; he was really a gay spirit and capable of love. He was a man with a long, melancholy face, seeing no humour in life and, if the truth must be told, he was positively ugly. Yet this man ‘Cinders’ had been seen on several occasions walking the streets with a woman on his arm. One of the lodgers said her looks were passable, and another said that they were more than passable compared to ‘Cinders.’ Brown had seen them together, and, said he, ‘Although a man ought to believe his own eyes, I would never believe such to be the case, had not “Cinders” said, “Good night, Mr. Brown.” And if a man is not to believe both eyes and ears, then what is he to believe?’

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Of course there could be no union between these poor souls; for she was in service, and he did odd jobs at the market, earning a shilling, or a little more on lucky days. As the manager said, it was amusing and could not amount to anything serious. They could go on walking arm in arm all their lives, for they would never be able to marry and walk apart.

This courtship had been the talk of the house for over three months when, one night, it was brought to an end in a strange manner. 'Cinders' and his love had been all the evening drinking ale in the 'Borough.' He, seeing some smoked haddock, fancied some for his supper and, after making a purchase, rejoined his fair companion. It was near midnight when it suddenly occurred to 'Cinders' that the manager closed the house at twelve o'clock, and if he - 'Cinders' - was not there by that time he would be out for the night. Reminding his lady of this, they both started for home, her road lying the same way as his. The manager was just closing the door when 'Cinders' arrived.

Now, goodness knows what demon put it into this woman's head to cook her lover's fish, but this she seemed determined to do. 'I am coming in to cook your supper,' said she. 'No,' answered the manager, 'this is a house for men only, and we do not allow women to enter, except on special occasions. Not only that, the kitchen is now closed, and I

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would not open it again for "Cinders" or any other man. He will have to go supperless to bed or come home earlier; he must do this, or seek lodgings elsewhere.' The lady then started to abuse the manager in a loud voice, but that gentleman, not heeding her, caught 'Cinders' by the shoulders, saying, 'Go to bed, you old fool,' at the same time shutting the door in the lady's face.

The next morning, when 'Cinders' was cooking his haddock, the manager lectured him severely on what had occurred the previous night: telling him that if he could afford to keep a lady cook he must seek better lodgings. Brown, who happened to be within hearing, gave evidence that he distinctly heard a woman's voice say, 'I am going to cook his fish,' but thought he must be dreaming. Even now he believed it was all a dream, and he would like to hear the truth from the manager's own lips, as to whether it was an actual fact or not. On being told that it was, Brown turned his eyes towards 'Cinders' and, seeing that gentleman hold down his head in wordless shame, Brown was forced to believe it all. Probably that was the end of their courtship, for they were never seen together after that.

I was forced by circumstances to live at this lodging-house much longer than I had expected, and saw quite a number of changes, on account of death coming to some of the old lodgers. One of the

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strangest and quaintest of them all was old Scotty Bill, the fly-catcher. Consumption did not claim him as a victim, for he died at the advanced age of eighty-three, which was wonderful for a man who had spent the best part of his life in a common lodging-house. No doubt if he had lived under better conditions he would have reached a hundred years with ease. All his interest was in flies. While other lodgers were discussing the abundance of fish in Billingsgate, or the scarcity of vegetables in the Borough market, Scotty could be seen counting the flies in the kitchen, as a sign whether he should go out with his fly-papers or not. His language was very strong, and the last words he was heard to utter surprised even those who were accustomed to him, by their unusual weight and speed. He was a stubborn invalid, and fought hard against going to the hospital. His death was quite characteristic, and I can hardly imagine it to have been otherwise. He, like many another one, was found one morning helpless in bed, and the manager, seeing that he was very ill, in spite of his assurance to the contrary, sent at once for the doctor. But when the latter arrived he and the manager were surprised to find the bed empty. On making inquiries they were told that Scotty was in the kitchen, and it was there that they found the old man, reading a newspaper. In spite of this the doctor saw that Scotty was not in

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good condition and tried to persuade him to go to bed, but this the old man swore that he would not do, and demanded some reason for such a request. Then there was a whispered consultation between the manager and the doctor, and it was decided to send for the ambulance and have him taken to the hospital whether he would or no. Now, Scotty had lived in that same lodging-house for over thirty years, and for that reason was well known in the locality. Therefore, when the ambulance arrived at the door, and a woman outside inquired of a lodger as to who the ambulance was for, and was told of Scotty Bill, the news soon spread abroad. In less than five minutes between twenty and thirty women had assembled at the door. These women of the slums were never very clean, and at the present time not one of them was in a fit condition to answer her own door; but they forgot this in their anxiety to see poor Scotty Bill and wish him a speedy recovery. At last the old man appeared, and it staggered him to see the number of women at the door. But when he heard them say, 'Poor Bill,' and 'Good luck to you, Scotty,' his fury knew no bounds. Standing with one foot on the step, he paused, and then poured forth such a torrent of abuse that some of the women lost all sympathy with him and feebly retaliated. He told them to go home and scrub their dirty faces, instead of coming there to watch him — and

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other things not fit to mention. It was, they confessed, the worst language they had ever heard — and more than one of them was capable of using very strong words. That was the last seen of Scotty Bill, and that was his dying speech, for he died on his arrival at the hospital.

I have heard of the death of a number more, men that lingered with such determination that it almost seems as if they have taken advantage of my absence and died; for they all seem to have gone one after the other since I left. 'One-eyed' Jim is dead. A terrible cough he had, but his face and neck were always like raw beef. That one eye of his blazed with such power that I have often imagined the devil hard at work shovelling half a ton of coal a minute to supply its fierce light. He also went off suddenly, walking the kitchen on Monday, and lying cold and dead on the following day.

'Rags' is also dead, the great drinker: the man who when abroad complained that whisky made him totter, whereas it was an earthquake that tumbled the city's towers, and made the firm-footed houses reel. 'The whisky's in my legs,' said Rags, not knowing that it was a great earthquake.

Monkey Sam and the Dodger are both dead, and there is no doubt but what the Dodger's death hastened Sam's. These two were the slyest pair of men that I have ever met. I believe they understood

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each other's thoughts so well that when one's body itched the other could, without seeing his friend make the least motion, scratch his own body in the exact place. These two men conversed by looks, and uttered very few words. They were so well matched and thought so much of each other that something more than accident must have brought two such men together. It was always clear that if anything happened to part them neither one would seek friendship elsewhere.

I had seen some of these men fighting against death day after day, but with such determination that I can hardly believe the report that calls them dead: especially as there is no proof of lettered stone, seeing that they are all in a pauper's grave. All these poor invalids in common lodging-houses are under the impression that doctors, when they find that their patients have no friends, and cannot be cured thoroughly, kill them. And that is why they are so stubborn, and fight till they can no longer move, before they will enter a hospital.

I have already mentioned my habit of writing, when in this common lodging-house, but it was over two years before this writing came to anything and I could publish my first little book. So that it was not long after this event when I was to be found living in a small lonely cottage in the country, sometimes very happy and sometimes very sad.

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I had been thinking all day of my strange companions of the past, both in America and England, and that accounted for my dream at night. In that dream I had invited them all to a grand supper, for I was now leading a different life. I was seated at the end of the table, which was full of fine things, and Brum, of America – the greatest beggar I had ever met – was seated at my right hand. After making them a short speech, in which I commended them on their way of living, and expressed deep regret that I had ever been cheated to follow Literature, who had led me into a treacherous swamp in which I stood up to the knees, with little power to either return or advance – after making this short speech, I invited them to help themselves, and to receive my undying friendship.

They then began to assist themselves with a hearty goodwill, all except Brum, who, to my surprise and confusion, sat motionless, glancing with scorn at his companions. 'There,' said he, with deep disgust; 'do you call these men good beggars? See the way they rush at the food, as though they had starved themselves all day in anticipation of this meal.' Saying this, he began slowly to feel the lining of his coat, and, after much trouble, took out a greasy paper parcel, placed it on his knees and began to make room for it on the table. This being done, he spread the contents before him and began

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to eat in a very slow and indifferent manner. As for myself, I could not eat for joy, to see all these dear faces before me, and sat smiling at one and another, laughing and sighing in turns. Sometimes I closed my eyes, and opened them again on my companions, endeared to me by a past that had few cares and worries.

By a strange coincidence, Irish Tim of London was paired with Oklahoma Sam of America. Now, the latter was a man of very few words, and he always had in hand a long dangerous-looking knife, with which he trimmed his nails, whittled sticks, or threw at cracks in the door, flies, or any other object that caught his eye. But he never allowed that knife to remain long out of his hand, for, if he threw it at a door nine feet away, he was sure to recover it in a couple of leaps, and before it had finished trembling in the wood. When I have seen him asleep at the cattleman's office, he always had this knife between his teeth.

As I have said, Sam was a man of few words, but on the subject of war he was more talkative than an old man. His memory on that subject was extraordinary: knowing the dates of battles, the number of their forces, names of regiments and generals, and the exact position of their entrenchments. Tim must have unwittingly broached this subject, for I was suddenly startled by hearing

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Oklahoma Sam say, 'This is Napoleon'; at the same time down went his knife over an inch into the table. I had noticed from the first that Sam had scornfully pushed aside my table knife, preferring to use his own, although he had retained the use of my fork. Looking at once in that direction, I saw Tim's face turned my way, with sarcasm trembling on his lips, which only needed a little encouragement, and he would then utter one of his scathing comments, thinking to blight at once the newly-opened flower of Sam's eloquence. 'Don't look that way, look at me,' cried the man from Oklahoma, placing his left hand on Tim's shoulder and speaking in a voice terribly quiet and firm. 'I see,' answered Tim, leaning back, with his two hands resting on the table — 'I see; this is Napoleon.' 'Yes, and this is Blücher,' continued Sam, taking the knife out of the table and quickly planting it dangerously near to Tim's right hand. 'And this,' cried Sam, forcing his words between his teeth and holding the knife suspended in the air, 'is Wellington,' and down it flashed between the two big fingers of Tim's left hand. Tim grew much paler as he removed that hand to his knee, and it was at once apparent to me that for the rest of the evening he was a spell-bound man, afraid to hazard even a civil question for fear it would be misunderstood.

Next to Sam and Tim sat Chicago Slim, who was

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relating to Bony – an English beggar – his awful suffering for a week in the State of Utah, where a beggar had no other food than bread and milk confronting him on every threshold he approached, and how travelling in that part was known to all beggars as ‘the bread-and-milk route.’ Such were his awful sufferings, related to the sympathetic ears of Bony, who, in exchange, mentioned his own disappointments in England, ‘where,’ said he, ‘I find public-houses to be the easiest, quickest, and most profitable places.’ He was just about to relate instances when the Curly Kid, who had been listening to their conversation, asked Chicago Slim this question: ‘How is it that, when I was in Utah, the citizens did not baby *me* with bread and milk?’ ‘Don’t know,’ answered Slim, uneasy and disconcerted. ‘I went to no houses, but begged on the fly,’ cried the Curly Kid, ‘and people had to give money or nothing. Slim, I reckon no true beggar would allow himself to be fed day after day on bread and milk.’ Chicago Slim did not answer, and at once fell in the estimation of Bony, who now considered him to be unworthy of further attention.

‘I shall never forget,’ said Bony to the Curly Kid, who had by his remarks proved himself to be a beggar equal to any emergency – ‘I shall never forget my disgust when, one Sunday morning, I found myself accidentally in a town where public-

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houses are shut on the Sabbath Day. I had to beg of proud, neatly-dressed church-goers, for the good-natured drinking man had not the heart to come out of doors, and you can imagine my ill success. How I wished all these people who were carrying Bibles and prayer-books had bottles and jugs instead!

How the hours passed, looking on these delightful companions! The first to leave was Tim, for Oklahoma Sam had become personal about his rough beard, and wanted to shave him, there and then, with his knife; and, in fact, was sharpening it on a stone for that purpose, which I had often seen him do before. Tim civilly but firmly refused this kindness at Sam's hands, and, being afraid that he might be forced to undergo such an operation, got up and, saying 'Good night, all,' left the room.

Others followed, one by one, and two by two, until at last I was left alone with Brum. 'Yes, and I must go, too,' said he; 'for I intend to call on a dentist who is good for twenty-five cents.' Saying which he also departed, leaving me standing alone, sad and motionless, at the end of the table.

'Here,' said I, walking up the room and looking affectionately at an empty chair — 'here sat Wee Scotty; here sat Monkey Jim, and there sat Never Sweat; here sat Rags, and there sat Cinders; here sat Irish Tim, and there sat Oklahoma Sam.'

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Indeed, there could be no mistake as to where Sam had sat, for he had used his knife to such purpose, in describing the tactics and manœuvres of Napoleon, Blücher, and Wellington, and their rapid movements in the heat of battle, that the tablecloth was all in tatters, and that part of the table was in splinters for nearly two feet square.

I stood undecided, for I had tasted their life, and, I knew that it was after all far better than the chained life I was now leading. In an instant I made up my mind to follow Brum, and again enjoy the open-air camp fires, and saunterings in strange towns, and lying under shady trees in quiet woods, within the sound of fresh springs. But I had scarcely moved when the room turned into a stone cell, and the wooden door became steel, and thick iron bars crossed the window. It must have been the strong feeling, incident to such a great change, that made me wake.

I then found myself sleeping alone in a small, poorly-furnished cottage, a stranger newly arrived in a strange village; and I had to admit, as a man in possession of all his senses, that I had far less cause to be happy than when I was a nameless wanderer with Brum in Louisiana, with Australian Red in the State of Michigan, or cabined with Wee Scotty and Oklahoma Sam on the cattleship *Tritonia*.

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Davies, W. H. (William Henry)
The adventures of Johnny Walker

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PR6007 .A8A8 1926

Davies, William Henry, 1871-1940.

The adventures of Johnny

Walker : tramp /

DATE

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